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ABSTRACT

A plan for increasing effective student writing skills was developed and implemented. Subjects were students in a regular first-grade class, a fifth-sixth grade behavior disorder (BD) class, and a seventh-eighth grade self-contained educable mentally handicapped (EMH) class, all of whom exhibited inadequate writing skills. Evidence for the existence of the problem included student school records, published test scores, and teacher observations. Analysis of probable cause data showed that students exhibited poor writing skills due to negative attitudes toward writing and a lack of a writing environment in which students were given the opportunity to write to learn. A review of solution strategies by writing experts suggested that the following interventions were necessary to increase the writing process: establish the five stages of the writing process and use them effectively to create a final product; and create a writing environment in which students were given the opportunity to write to learn. Post-intervention data indicated that the writing workshop environment, which emphasized meaningful communication, promoted real purposes for writing. Findings suggest that students increased their written expression skills, learned to use higher order thinking skills, and maintained or improved their enthusiasm toward writing. (Contains 17 figures and 56 references; sample forms and data are appended.) (Author/CR)

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IMPROVING STUDENT WRITING SKILLS THROUGH THE USE OF "WRITING TO LEARN"

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a plan for increasing effective student writing skills. The targeted population, consisting of a regular education first grade class, a fifth-sixth behavior disorder (BD) class, and a seventh and eighth grade self-contained educable mentally handicapped (EMH) class, exhibited inadequate writing skills. Evidence for the existence of the problem included student school records, published test scores, and teacher observations.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students exhibited poor writing skills due to negative attitudes toward writing and a lack of a writing environment in which students were given the opportunity to write to learn.

A review of solution strategies by writing experts suggested that the following interventions were necessary to increase the writing process: establish the five stages of the writing process and use them effectively to create a final product; and create a writing environment in which students were given the opportunity to write to learn.

Post intervention data indicated that the writing workshop environment, which emphasized meaningful communication, promoted real purposes for writing. Students increased their written expression skills, learned to use higher order thinking skills, and maintained or improved their enthusiasm toward writing.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of Problem

The targeted students, which include a regular education first grade class, an intermediate behavior disorder class, and a seventh and eighth grade self-contained educable mentally handicapped (EMH) class, exhibit inadequate writing skills. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes student school records, published test scores, and teacher observations.

The research will be taking place in three separate school sites: Site A being the seventh and eighth grade EMH class, Site B being the behavior disorder class, site C being the first grade class. School site A exists within community site A, school site B exists within community site B, and school site C exists within community site C.

Immediate Problem Context

School Site A

The total student population at the targeted school A is 1100 students. The majority of these students is White. There is a 3.5% Black population, 2.7% Mexican-American population, and a 1.8 Asian/Pacific Islander population. Students who have been found to be eligible for bilingual education with limited English proficiency constitute 1.8% of the population.

Twenty percent of the student population are low income students from families receiving public aid, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, being supported in foster homes with public funds, or eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches.

A perfect attendance rate of 100% means that all students attended school every day. The attendance rate at the targeted school is 95.2%. The student mobility rate is based on the number of students who enroll in or leave a school during a school year. The student mobility rate is 10.7%. Chronic truants are students who are absent from school without a valid cause for 10% or more of last 180 school days. The chronic truancy rate is 2.4% with a total of 12 chronic truants.

The average years of experience of teachers at the targeted school A is 14.8 years. Teachers holding a bachelor's degree constitute 53% of the teaching staff. Teachers with master's degree and above constitute 47% of the teaching staff. Special area staff, defined as those teachers or aides that teach or give support to staff and special needs children at the targeted school A have an average of 12.3 years of experience. Special area teachers holding a bachelor's degree comprise 17% of the specialized staff. Those holding a master's degree constitute 57% of the specialized staff. Seven percent of the specialized staff hold an associate's degree. The administrators at the targeted school A have 25.5 years of experience with a master's degree. Teachers of White background constitute 98% of the teaching staff at the targeted school and teachers of Mexican-American background constitute 2% of the teaching staff.

With the start of the 1996-97 school year the targeted school A became the new middle school for the targeted district and is comprised of fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. The targeted school facility A consists of a fifth-sixth grade one-story wing that is 85 years old and a seventh and eighth grade two-story wing that is nine months old. Twenty-six classrooms make up the fifth-sixth grade wing which includes six special area classrooms comprised of a fifth-sixth self-contained learning disability class, a fifth-sixth self-contained behavior disorder class, a fifth-sixth self-contained educable mentally handicapped class, a fifth-sixth resource learning disability class, a sixth grade resource learning disability class, and a fifth through eighth grade speech class in which students are "pulled out" for services. The seventh and eighth grade wing consists of thirteen classrooms on the upper floor and thirteen classrooms on the lower floor; each floor containing an equal number of core classes and special area classes. Special area classes include a seventh grade self-contained learning disability class, an eighth grade self-contained learning disability class, a seventh grade inclusion class of learning disability students, an eighth grade inclusion class of learning disability students, a seventh and eighth grade self-contained behavior disorder class, a fifth through eighth grade class of life skills students, and a seventh and eighth grade self-contained class of educable mentally handicapped students (EMH). The life skills class is a county co-op special education class, renting space within the middle school from the targeted school A district. The seventh and eighth grade wing houses two science labs for the fifth and sixth grade students respectively. The cafeteria in the seventh and eighth grade wing services the entire student body. The seventh and eighth grade wing also houses the administration and counselor offices for the school, school psychologist, social worker, and nurse as well as a library and two computer labs. Labs can be checked out for classroom use with the librarian. The fifth-sixth grade wing houses a computer class, an art room, and a band/music room. The seventh and eighth grade wing houses an all-school in-school suspension room. The seventh and eighth grade art classroom is constructed partially in the old wing with an additional area beginning the new wing. The fifth-sixth grade wing houses the all-school faculty lounge and teacher workroom. The fifth-sixth grade wing houses a gymnasium/stage for sixth grade physical education classes and all-school assemblies. The seventh and eighth grade wing houses a gymnasium with an attached weight room for seventh and eighth grade students along with a band room and choral/music room.

The average class size at the targeted school is 24 students per fifth grade class, 29 students per sixth grade class, and 19.4 students per seventh and eighth grade classes as reported on the first day of school in May. The instructional setting at the targeted school A is composed of the following core subjects: mathematics, science, English, and social science. English includes all language arts courses. Time devoted to the teaching of the core subjects is the average number of minutes of instruction per five day school week in each subject area divided by five (State School Report Card, 1995). The sixth through eighth grades follow a middle school philosophy of two teams per grade level, which divides students into teams of 90 to 110 students, and includes a challenge team for each grade level. With the exception of the fifth grade challenge class, the fifth grade classes do not follow a middle school teaming philosophy.

The fifth-sixth grade students at the targeted school A receive 80 minutes per day of language arts, 40 minutes per day of math, science, and social science, 40 minutes per day of guided practice (study hall), 80 minutes per week of music and physical education, and 40 minutes per week of art. The seventh and eighth grade students at the targeted school A receive 42 minutes per day of each of the core subjects. Seventh grade students receive 42 minutes per day for a nine week grading period of either art, music, computer, or reading study skills, based on the rotation schedule of the team of students. Eighth grade students receive 42 minutes per day for a nine week grading period of either art, music, computer, or civics, based on the rotation schedule of the team of students. Seventh grade students receive 42 minutes per day of physical education for three nine week grading periods and 42 minutes per day of Quest, a health education program, for one nine week grading period. Eighth grade students receive 42 minutes per day of physical education for three nine week grading periods and 42 minutes per day of health for one nine week grading period. Seventh and eighth grade students rotate in and out of physical education, or health according to the students' team rotation schedule.

Sixth through eighth grade students receive a homeroom of 38 minutes per day in which Channel One programming is viewed. Homerooms follow the middle school philosophy of promoting teacher-student mentoring, student self-esteem issues, career awareness, and team building activities. The fifth grade classes do not receive a homeroom; however, this time is built into their daily schedule and used for special programming.

Sixth through eighth grade special area inclusion classes follow the sixth through eighth grade regular education classes of core subjects as well as the respective rotation subjects according to the individual team schedules. Students in the other special area classes receive instruction in core classes within the self-contained classroom settings. These students also receive music, art, computer, reading/study skills, or health as the rotation schedule allows. All sixth through eighth grade special area classes follow the same homeroom schedule dictated for regular education students. Special area students of the targeted school A may or may not be included in a homeroom with regular education students. This decision is dictated by administration, teacher, and/or IEP guidelines. All special area students of the targeted school A may or may not receive speech services, physical therapy, or orientation or mobility services. These services are deemed necessary or unnecessary according to the goals and objectives of each student's IEP.

The targeted school A offers a variety of extracurricular activities: track, volleyball, basketball, drama, chess, and art clubs, band, chorus, and yearbook and newspaper staffs (R. Wasson, Principal; J. Jennings, Principal, personal communication, April 15, 1996).

School Site B

Targeted school B consists of 1,151 students. Of the students, 81.1% are White, 1.6% Black, 16% Hispanic, 1% Pacific Islander, and 1% Native American. The population is made up of 22% low income families and 2.4% are limited English proficiency.

The attendance rate for targeted school B is 94%. Student mobility is 20.4% and chronic truancy is 1.3% with 13 chronic truants.

The average class size ranges from 24.9 in kindergarten to 29.5 in sixth grade. In grades three through six, 40 to 45 minutes per day is devoted to math, 20 to 40 minutes to science,107 to 134 minutes to English/reading, and 20 to 40 minutes per day to social studies.

There are 246 teachers at targeted school B. Of those 73.3% are female and 26.3% are male. The teaching staff is 100% White. The average years of experience of teachers is 15.6 years. Those teachers with a bachelor's degree make up 49.3%. Those with a master's degree or above make up 50.7%. The average salary of certified teachers within targeted school B is $35,117, while the average salary of an administrator is $53,469.

The administered state assessment tool used at targeted school B is The Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP). The IGAP was administered in the areas or reading and writing to third and sixth graders. The average reading score of the third graders in reading was 243 on a band of 227-259. Writing scores for the third graders was 16.9 on a band of 16.1-17.7. The sixth graders' average for reading was 301 with a band of 283-319. Average writing score was 22.8 with a band of 22.2-23.4. In the third grade 58% of the students met the present reading goal while 7% of the students exceeded this goal. Writing at the third grade level had 54% of the students meet the preset goal, 33% of the sixth grade students exceeded in the area of reading. At the sixth grade level 65% of the students met, and 33% of the students exceeded the preset goals in writing (State School Report Card, 1995).

School Site C

Targeted school C has a total student population of 297. The majority of these students is White, 87.9%. There is a 0.7 % Black population, 10.8 % Mexican American, and 0.7% Asian Pacific Islander.

The percent of students that are from low income families is 13.1%. The percent of students that are limited English proficient is 2.7%.

The attendance rate at targeted school C is 96.6%. Student mobility rate is 13.3% and the truancy rate is 0.0%.

The average years of experience of teachers at targeted school C is 14.5 years. Teachers holding a bachelor's degree constitute 61.8% of the teaching staff. Teachers with a master's degree and above constitute 38.2% of the teaching staff. The administrator has 16 years of administrative experience with a total of 24 years in the teaching profession. The teaching staff consists of 13 classroom teachers, one special education resource teacher, a reading specialist, and two aides. One aide is under the direct supervision of the resource teacher and the other aide is the librarian. Music, art, speech, and physical education teachers travel between school buildings. The teaching staff is 100% White. Average teachers' salaries for the elementary district are $34,128. The administrator's salary is $55,483.

The average class size for targeted school C is 20.5 students. Per pupil expenditure is $4,078 for the district and $5,705 for the state.

The core subjects taught at targeted school C are: language arts, mathematics, science, and social science. Language arts includes spelling, grammar, reading and writing. Time devoted to the teaching of core subjects per day is 60 minutes for mathematics, 30 minutes for science, 185 minutes for language arts, and 30 minutes for social science. Students receive instruction in music and physical education for 60 minutes a week and art for 40 minutes every other week (State School Report Card, 1995).

Targeted school C was built in 1959. Two additions have been added, one in 1970 and the other in 1982. A detached portable classroom was added in 1988. There are 14 classrooms. One classroom of kindergarten, two classrooms of each grade level first through sixth, and one special education/reading classroom make up the 14 classrooms. The gymnasium also serves as the cafeteria and the library is off the hallway. Music and art education are held in the portable classroom (T. Ator, Principal, personal communication, April 16, 1996).

The Surrounding Community

Community Site A

The targeted school A lies within a rural community setting consisting of 15,134 people. The community A is separated north and south by a river and east and west by a main rural route. The majority of the population is White. People with Black origin comprise 4.4% of the total population while 2.7% are Mexican-American, .8% are Asian/Pacific Islander, and the remaining .2% of the population is of other races. The median age is 36.6 years with 50% of the population being male (Information Decision System, 1993).

The median family income in this community is $30,198. The per capita income for 1990 was $11,114. People in the community who are below the poverty level comprise 10.6%. Six percent of the households are headed by a female (Northwest Illinois Census Data, 1990A).

The median housing cost in the targeted community for targeted school A is $54,781. People living in a single home dwelling comprise 77% of the total population. Nineteen percent of the population inhabit multi-unit dwellings. The remaining 4% of the population live in a mobile home or trailer park (Information, 1993).

Forty-seven percent of the population of the targeted community is comprised of White collar workers. Thirty-one percent comprise manufacturing employment and 18.2% comprise government employment, which would include the one state transportation office within the community and a state correctional facility. There are 13 factories, two printing companies, three utility companies, one hospital, two medical profession buildings, and numerous independently owned businesses. The majority of the work force is non-union (Dixon, 1995). The community has a total of 31 houses of worship with the majority being Protestant and the remaining being Catholic and Jewish. The two Catholic churches house private Kindergarten through eighth grade schools (County Fact Book, 1995). The targeted community has .05% crime rate with property offenses being 95% of the total crime (Tri-Cities Development Partnership, 1996).

Ten percent of the population of the targeted community A have completed zero to eight years of schooling. Thirteen percent have some high school education; 37% are high school graduates; 26.7% have had some college education, and 12.9% are college graduates. The median years of school completed is 13 (Information, 1993).

The community's school district enrollment is 3,310 students. Beginning with the 1996-97 school year there are three buildings servicing kindergarten through fourth grade students and one middle school that services fifth through eighth grade students. In the 1995-96 school year the middle school completed a 6.7 million dollar addition that became the seventh and eighth grade wing. The high school enrollment is 977 students. The community school district of school site A also includes a county co-op which provides services for the A county's special education classes. This includes a residential school, staffed by the district of A and housed in a neighboring community. The majority of the students are White; 3% are black; 2.1% are Mexican-American; 1.6% are Asian/Pacific Islander, and .1% are Native American. The percentage of low income students in this district is 16.6%. Limited English proficient students are those who have been found to be eligible for bilingual education and comprise .6% of the students in the district.

The average years of experience of teachers and administrators in the targeted district is 14.4 years. Fifty percent of the teachers hold bachelor's degrees and 49.6% hold a master's degree and above. The pupil-teacher ratio of the targeted district is 21.3 students per teacher. The pupil-administrator ratio is 280.1 students per administrator.

The average teacher and administrator salaries are based on full time equivalents. In addition to salaries, teachers receive various monetary benefits and compensation such as tax-sheltered annuities, retirement benefits, bonus and extracurricular duty payments. The average teacher salary in this district is $35,938. The average administrator salary is $59,940. The operating expenditure per pupil is $4,695. The total district expenditure is $16,235,102 (School, 1995).

The high school in the targeted community A has access to a vocational center in a neighboring community. High school graduates and non-graduates have the opportunity to attend the two-year community college. This college is in the process of offering four-year degrees from universities within the targeted A and B state (Sauk hopes, 1996).

The community offers a wide variety of support to the targeted A school district. The Partners in Education is a widely sponsored program. Area businesses are matched up with local schools in order to "adopt" the school so that special events and activities can be provided throughout the school year. Each year the Chamber of

Commerce in the targeted community A co-sponsors "Business in the Schools" day during American Education Week along with a reception for educators and business people. Chamber of Commerce members participate in Junior Achievement programs within the targeted A schools. The chamber accepts special school projects such as a middle school referendum that was successfully passed within the targeted A community of voters. The police department sponsors a drug prevention program for all sixth grade students within the district (Dixon Area, 1995; Telegraph, 1996).

The community site A offers extensive youth leagues through YMCA and park district sponsorship (Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 1995). The local library promotes school involvement through its summer reading programs and book discussions. Young author winners in community A school district are invited to a "favorite author" reading night. The targeted community A hosts an art club that promotes the fine arts for the community (N. Gillfillan, personal communication, April 9, 1996).

Community Site B

Targeted school B lies within a rural community setting of 16,700 people. The community covers an area of 5.5 square miles. The majority of the population, 93.3%, is White. The population also consists of .6% Black, .2% American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut while, .4% of the population is Asian/Pacific Islander and 10.3% is made up of Hispanic origin.

There are a total of 6,140 households within community B. Of those, 4,307 households are family households and 918 of the total are single-parent families. The total population of 16,700 have a median age of 31.9 years. Those 25-44 years of age make up the largest number with 4,911 (30.8%), followed by 4,341 (27.2%) persons under the age of 18. There is a ratio of 48.4% male and 51.6% female.

Dwellings within community B total 6,414. Those owner occupied make up 62.6% of the total while 37.4% of the total dwellings are renter occupied. Median home value is $58,400 with a rent median of $303 a month. Total number of one-unit addresses are 3,812 (59.4%), 2-9 units 24.5%, 10+ units 7.9%. There are 520 mobile homes within community B, which is 8.1% of the total.

A major employer within corporate limits includes an automobile manufacturer employing 3,700 people. There are seven other large manufacturers specializing in fasteners, food processing, paper board products, furnaces, beauty salon equipment, ice cream, and wire products. These companies employ between 120 and 350 employees.

Blue collar workers make up the majority of community B's work force with 47.2%, followed by white collar workers at 25%; clerical, 13.3%; sales, 9%; and professional workers comprising 8.8% of the total work force.

The school district consists of one central administration, four elementary schools K-6, one junior high school 7-8, one high school 9-12, and a special education center housing some of the special education classes. Community B also has 26 full time police officers, 20 full time fire fighters, an E 911 system, three parks, one country club, a golf course, public pool, recreation path, and a YMCA. Culturally, community B contains three museums, 25 churches, nine fair grounds, a county arts council and an Autumn Pioneer Festival (Community Profile, 1995).

Community Site C

Targeted school C lies within a rural community setting of 8,769 people. The majority of the population is White, 92.2%. Mexican-Americans comprise 10.45%, Black 0.3%, American Indians 0.25%, Asian Pacific Islander 0.7%, and 6.6% other. Almost one-third of community C residents live outside the city limits, but in the community zip code area. There are 4,652 households in this area. When these households are included the population is 12,841.

The median family income is $33,485. Per capita income for 1990 was $11,759. People living in poverty is 10.7%. Persons between the ages of 0-17 living in poverty are 13.7%. Persons over the age of 65 years living in poverty are 8.0%. The percentage of households headed by a female is 6.0%. Married couples with children are 26.5%.

The median housing cost in the community is $54,700. There are 3,605 housing units of which 56.5% are owner occupied. The median rent is $255 a month. Rental property consists of apartments, single family homes, duplexes and trailer parks.

The community has four public elementary schools, one junior high school, one high school, and one private elementary parochial school. The county juvenile residential school is part of the high school and elementary districts. A community college is within 11 miles and a State university is within 15 miles (Northwest Illinois Census Data, 1990B).

The high school graduates 83.7% of the students. The average number of college bound students is 23.2% (State School Report Card, 1995). The high school is a receiving district for the surrounding farm communities. It is a separate district from the elementary district.

The community has 12 factories and 14 churches. The majority of the population is employed at one of the factories. White collar workers consist of teachers, ministers, lawyers, doctors, and business people. Community Site C has no significant crime rate. There is a small Latin King gang comprised of 15 students (Police Chief A. Gore, personal communication, April 4, 1996).

The community is supportive of the schools. Many events are planned and organized for the students. The police department sponsors the D.A.R.E. drug awareness program for all sixth grade students. The Chamber of Commerce and local businesses sponsor a tree decorating contest for grade school classrooms at Christmas. The Civic Center sponsors a science fair. The Jaycees hold a needy children's Christmas walk with many teachers also participating.

McDonalds sponsors the McBuddy program, which buys school supplies for low income children. Pizza Hut sponsors the Book It reading incentive program for students to earn individual monthly pizzas. The federal Reading Is Fundamental program is sponsored by the local merchants. The district school volunteer program is active on a daily basis by tutoring students, speaking to individual classrooms on a variety of subjects, and doing home-based projects for teachers.

Regional and National Context of Problem

Writing is a process. Writing is a teaching method (Avery, 1993). Teachers of kindergarten through college level classes find themselves up against the problem of being able to stimulate students to write and to write well without damaging the students' self-respect or intrinsic motivation (Avery, 1993; Atwell, 1987). Writing, as a tool, can effectively help to bridge the gap between a child's personal and school life (Cooper, 1993).

Many teachers do not use writing as a tool. They avoid teaching writing or will substitute other tasks they deem more manageable for the actual teaching of writing (Kluwin & Kelly-Blumenthal, 1992). The fundamentals of teaching writing have become the drills, workbooks, and dittos of too many English classrooms. Sometimes a theme is assigned to the student, often without any meaning. By junior and senior high level, "English is the subject rated 'interesting' by the fewest number of students" as found by Goodlad (cited in Atwell, 1987, p. 40).

According to Kantrowitz and Wingert (1989), "in many classes grammar and spelling have become more important than content. While mastering the technical aspects of writing is essential as a child gets older, educators warn against emphasizing form over content in the early grades" (p. 54). Students move through the system without really becoming competent writers or comprehenders of writing.

Graves reminds us (as cited in Atwell, 1987, Forward), of the 1986 National Assessment of Educational Progress findings in that "although student skills are adequate, there remain major problems in text coherence, and the ability of students to use information to persuade is severely lacking. There are few classrooms to which we can point and say with assurance, 'There's good writing'."

Graves, Sowers, and Caulkins spent two years researching first and third grade writers and their teachers in order to discover the process of writing for children and how schools can help (Atwell, 1987). According to Graves (as cited in Zaragoza & Vaughn, 1992) researchers are questioning the efficacy of the more traditional approaches to writing instruction.

Babad, Bernieri, & Rosenthal's study (as cited in Zaragoza & Vaughn, 1995, p. 47) shows that "understanding students' perceptions of teachers' instructional behavior has received relatively little emphasis despite consensus about the importance of students' perceptions." Children in a third grade and from lower to middle SES groups were interviewed as to their thoughts about how writing should be taught. Their explanation of the writing process was sophisticated for third graders, but they had participated in a writing process community (Zaragoza & Vaughn, 1995). Full-day Kindergartens and four-year old preschools have prompted concern for appropriate instruction and programs reflecting an emergent literacy perspective (Strickland, 1990).

The writing process and successful interventions are also becoming an issue within the special education community (Tindal & Hasbrouck, 1991). "The writing of students with mild disabilities has been shown to be different and delayed from that non disabled students," according to Myklebust, 1973 and Tomlan, 1986 (as cited in Grant, Lazarus, & Peyton, 1992, p. 22).

In 1991 the U.S. Department of Labor (as cited in Bruininks, Thurlow, & Ysseldyke, 1992, p. 98) stated that "generic competencies and skills apply to all students, including those with disabilities and that these competencies and skills are not consistently taught, learned or assessed by standard educational measures." Furthermore, educational systems are looking at programs for special education students as part of a social reform instead of a public responsibility (Bruininks et al., 1992).

"The education of students with mental retardation must be based upon the unique needs and learning characteristics of each student" (Wehmeyer, 1992, p. 307). Cawley & Parmar (1995) state that:

> It would be an egregious error to assume that IQ alone can account for performance expectancies and discrepancies. Within any IQ level there are students performing at a range of discrepancy levels. Individual student's needs should be determined by equivalent procedures for assessment and these needs must be met by individuals trained to meet specific, not categorical needs. (p. 128)

Encouraging students to write must take into account a student's self-esteem and inner belief system that one can successfully write. One must, therefore, speak of the environment in which students are taught to write. Teachers want to impart their knowledge from behind the "big desk" to students in all subject areas. This keeps teachers and students separate. The classroom environment does not allow for the process of learning to take place. Students enter and leave the class with little confidence over the "big desk" material taught (Atwell, 1987). Elkind (as cited in Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1989, p. 51), states that "the early grades pose special challenges because that's when children's attitudes toward school and learning are shaped. He further comments (cited in Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1989):

> During this critical period the child's budding sense of competence is frequently under attack, not only from inappropriate instructional pictures. . . but also from the hundred and one feelings of hurt, frustration, and rejection that mark a child's entrance into the world of schooling, competition, and peer-group involvement. (p. 53)

Adolescents during the middle school years see themselves and others through new eyes. They are critical and often times brutal (Atwell, 1987). "They measure themselves against the way they think they should be, and they seldom measure up; suddenly the world doesn't measure up either. Often their criticisms of others begin with dissatisfaction with self" (Atwell, 1987, p. 30). "Placement in the junior high environment makes new demands on students, creates further attention to the importance of independence and requires them to function without the level of support to which they have become accustomed" (Polloway, Patton, Smith, & Roderique, 1991, p. 145). This would be more profoundly true for mentally retarded students. However, according to best practices in academic instruction for students with mild retardation by Cawley, Miller, Carr, Decker, & Polloway (as cited in Polloway et al., 1991), self-esteem goals can increase if students make progress in academic skills. Thus, the educational environment in which writing is taught is important (Zaragoza & Vaughn, 1995). Boyer says (cited in Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1989, p. 51), "we've made remarkable breakthroughs in understanding the development of children, the development of learning and the climate that enhances that, but what we know in theory and what we're doing in the classroom are very different." Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde (1993) agree that:

> Surprisingly few reformers have paid serious attention to the content of schooling. Few prominent reformers have focused systematically on teaching processes, the nature of the interactions between kids and teachers in school. If our educational system has truly collapsed then the careful critique and renewal of instructional methods would seem an urgent priority. (p. 2, 3)

Effective instructional strategies for all students, whether regular education or special education, whether high, average, or low IQ need to be researched (Storey, 1994; Collins, Gast, Ault-Jones, Wolery, 1991). Methods to encourage students to write successfully need to be researched so that students can build academic and emotional confidence in their abilities to comprehend the written word and to use that word to add meaning to their school, home, and community lives (Atwell, 1987).

Chapter 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Targeted Class A

The targeted class at school A is a self-contained educable mentally handicapped class (EMH). As the data in table 1 indicate, seven of the students qualify with EMH being the primary handicapping condition. One student qualifies with a primary handicap of Behavior Disorder with EMH being secondary. One student qualifies with an Autism handicap being the primary condition. Students' I.Q.'s range from 56 to 78. Students' academic abilities range from a 1.2 grade level to a 4.2 grade level in reading decoding, reading comprehension, and written language, as noted on the current IEP's.

The three female students and six male students follow the regular education students' daily schedule dictated by the middle school philosophy; however, they are not included into any of the teams or their respective homerooms. With the exception of music, art, computer, reading/study skills, physical education, health or quest, and lunch, the students spend more than 50 percent of their day receiving instruction within a classroom on the 7th grade floor of the 7th and 8th grade wing, located between the behavior disorder class and the reading/study skills class and across from the science classrooms/labs.

Table 1

Targeted Class A Student Population Defined

			Recent Case File Scores		
Student	IEP Qualified	I.Q. (last 3 years)	Reading Decoding	Reading Compreh.	Written Language
Male A	EMH	63	1.6	2.3	1.7
Male B	EMH	56	1.2	3.0	1.6
Female C	EMH	65	2.3	1.8	2.4
Male D	BD/EMH	72	3.7	3.2	4.2
Male E	EMH	64	2.6	4.2	3.6
Female F	EMH	63	2.4	2.4	2.5
Male G	Autism	73	7.8	2.9	5.2
Female H	EMH/Sp.Lang.	58	2.4	1.6	2.0
Male I	EMH	61	1.6	1.6	2.1

Class A is a cross-categorical class as defined by the state guidelines of special education rules and regulations and the administration. The teacher holds a bachelor's degree plus 16 with 13 years experience teaching behavioral disorder, learning disabled, and/or educable mentally handicapped students. The class functions with the assistance of a full time classroom aide, who holds an associates degree. The autistic student functions with the assistance of a full time one-on-one aide, who holds a bachelor's degree.

The class receives individualized instruction in the core areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social science. Students have a guided practice in which they receive further instructional assistance. The teacher or teacher aide accompanies students to the rotation classes in order to assist in the areas of socialization and academic accommodations. The targeted class A follows the assertive discipline policy of the district as well as a daily point sheet which includes individual behavior management according to IEP criteria and teacher observation.

The students come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds within the targeted school A community. The class has a range of parental support from non-compliant to compliant with the rules and/or expectations of their individual student.

A parent writing survey was given to the parents of the students (AppendixA). As indicated in Table 2, one hundred percent of the parents felt that formal writing skills should be part of the daily school curriculum; however, 44% felt that only 15 minutes should be devoted to writing, while one-third of the parents surveyed felt that 30 minutes should be devoted to writing. Twenty-two percent gave no answer. Seventy-six percent of the parents promote writing at home by doing more of the day-to-day types of writing, such as list making or note and letter writing. Only one-fifth of the parents promote writing at home by doing the creative expression types of writing, such as writing poetry or stories. Four percent of the parents promote writing by doing leisure writing activities such as crossword puzzles.

Sixty-six percent of the parents felt that his/her child enjoyed writing activities, but responses indicated that enjoyed writing activities were of a day-to-day type as 46% of the total responses noted at-home writing to include letters, lists, notes, and schedules. Only 23% of the total responses depicted at-home writing to be for a creative expression purpose such as story writing, lyrics, or scripts. Fifteen percent of the total responses given indicated that parents felt their children wrote in a leisure-type activity. Twenty-two percent did not respond to this portion of the survey.

Table 2

Parent Writing Survey Results

Belief Category	Number of Target Class A Students	Number of Target Class B Students	Number of Target Class C Students
Formal writing skills part of daily school curriculum			
yes	9	3	16
no	0	0	0
Time devoted to writing			
15 minutes	4	2	6
30 minutes	3	1	7
30+ minutes	0	0	1
no response given	2	0	2
Promote writing at home by:			
list making	6	0	9
writing thank you notes	6	0	11
writing notes to teachers	4	0	11
writing notes to family members	8	0	3
helping child with their writing	7	1	14
writing letters	7	1	5
writing poetry	0	0	0
writing stories	1	0	4
doing crossword puzzles	2	0	4
no response given	0	2	2
Child enjoys writing activities			
yes	6	0	12
no	2	3	3
sometimes	1	0	0
no response given	0	0	1
Examples of enjoyed writing activities			
schedules	1	0	0
thank you notes	1	0	1
letters to friends	2	0	3
general list making	2	0	4
letter formation	0	0	1
stories	1	0	2
scripts	1	0	0
journal	1	0	1
lyrics	1	0	0
sign making	0	0	1
menus	0	0	1
making cards	0	0	3
writes when plays	1	0	4
puzzles	0	0	1
no response given	2	3	0
	n = 9	n = 3	n = 16

The students were given the Knudson Writing Attitude Survey. Responses were based on a five point Lickert scale (AppendixB). The survey can be broken up into three categories of writing: a writing preference vs. other home activities; students' self assessment of their writing; and personal attitude toward writing for school or job (AppendixC). This survey indicates that students have a positive attitude toward writing in all three categories as results show a 50%, 68%, and 59% positive response in each of the categories respectively, with a 44%, 21%, and 24% negative response in each category respectively. Only five percent, 11%, and 17% respectively in each category showed a neutral attitude toward writing in the three categories. This information is further illustrated in figure 1. One may want to note that the preference for writing vs. other home activity category has the lowest positive percentage, or 50% vs. 68% and 59% in the other two categories. This may be further supported by the parents' survey indication of parents noting a lower percentage of at home writing to be for creative expression or leisure-type activity purposes.

The Knudson Interview toward writing (Appendix D) was given to each of the students on an individual basis. Fifty-five percent felt that the word "writing" brought to mind writing, while 22% felt it meant printing, and 22% felt it meant drawing. One student also felt it meant "fun". When asked if they would rather work in a workbook or write a story or write in a journal, 42% of the total responses noted a story writing preference while, 29% of the responses noted a workbook preference, and 29% a journal preference. Seventy-seven percent of the students interviewed felt they could write better than they do with 66% of the students feeling if they practiced more, concentrated more, and wrote neater, they would be able to write better.

One hundred percent of the students interviewed felt that writing was important for school success and yet when asked if writing was important in junior and senior

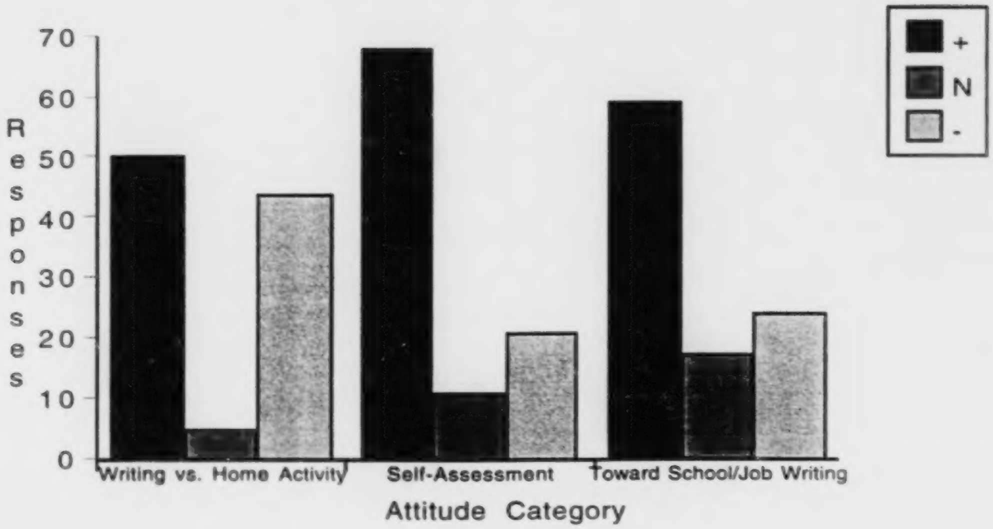

Figure 1. Categories and responses of student attitudes toward writing for the targeted class A during the first week of the 1996-97 school year.

high school, one student responded "no". Fifty-five percent of the students surveyed indicated they liked writing long stories or reports. Of the total responses given, 21% of responses indicated that math kinds of writing were the kinds of writing done in school. Twenty-one percent of the responses indicated that practicing handwriting, whether it be cursive, printing, or drawing, was the kind of writing done in school. Sixteen percent of the responses indicated a creative expression type of writing being done in school and, interestingly enough, 36% of the responses indicated writing on a more personal level, such as gaining friends' phone numbers, letter writing, lists, notes, and just doing their own thing, was being done at school. This response could be due to the make up of the self-contained classrooms that the students are accustomed to, in that students went through their elementary school years into their middle school years with the same students. Spending the majority of class time with the same peers year after year may give students a "family" feeling in which they have learned to find and take advantage of opportunities in which to complete those personal types of writing.

Eighty-eight percent of the students felt they had learned to write in school and by the teacher. One hundred percent felt that writing was important for job success. Thirty-six percent of the responses indicated that printing, cursive, or spelling kinds of writing were done on the job, while 14% of the responses indicated money kinds of writing; 14% indicated writing to complete forms, and 14% indicated a creative kind of writing such as writing done while designing or building.

When asked if there was anything else they wanted to tell about writing, eight of the students said "no". One student said, "writing is important".

The Test of Written Expression (TOWE) was given to the students in a group testing situation. Scores for this test are separated into an item score and an essay score. The grade level ability of students and the TOWE manual dictated the starting point for the item portion of the test. When item 30 was given, testing ended in order to determine whether five consecutive items were missed. Scoring ended at that point. If, at item 30, there were not five consecutive items missed, testing continued on an individual basis until five consecutive items were missed. This provided the ceiling for the item portion of the test. The essay portion of the test was given separately to students in a group testing situation.

The data in Appendix E can be summarized for the purpose of this research. Item test scores for the TOWE for the students indicate that 11% of the students fall within the less than one percentile. Fifty-six percent fall within the first to tenth percentile. Eleven percent of the students fall within the eleventh to twentieth percentile and twenty-two percent fall within the twenty-first to twenty-fifth percentile.

Figure 2 further depicts this information.

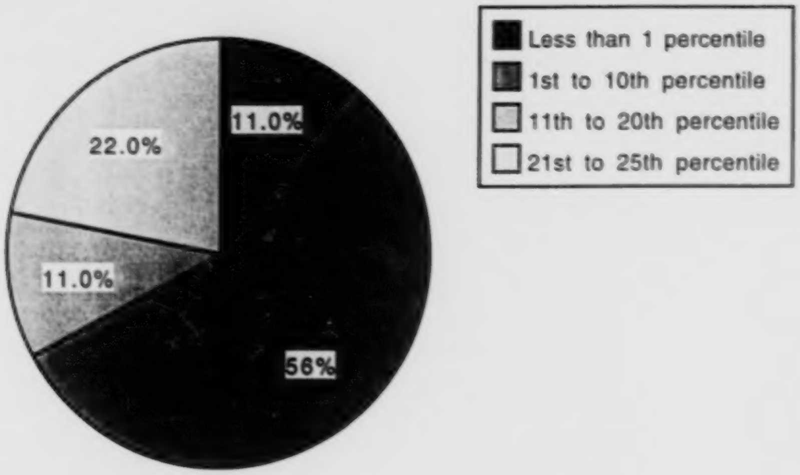

Figure 2. Targeted class A item subtest percentile scores for Test of Written Expression, September 1996.

Essay test scores for the TOWE for the students indicate that 44% of the students fell within the less than one percentile while one-third fell within the 4th to 10th percentile. One student fell at the 58th percentile and one student fell at the 89th percentile. This information is further illustrated in figure 3.

Furthermore, according to the TOWE manual, the standard scores of the item portion clearly indicate that 88% of the students fell within the below average to very poor performance levels with 63% of those students falling within the poor to very poor performance levels. One student fell in the average performance level. The TOWE standard scores of the essay portion indicate that 77% of the students fell within the poor to very poor performance level. One student fell in the average performance level and one student fell in the above average performance level. One may want to

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note that the students with the highest I.Q.'s fell in the higher performance levels with regard to the TOWE manual.

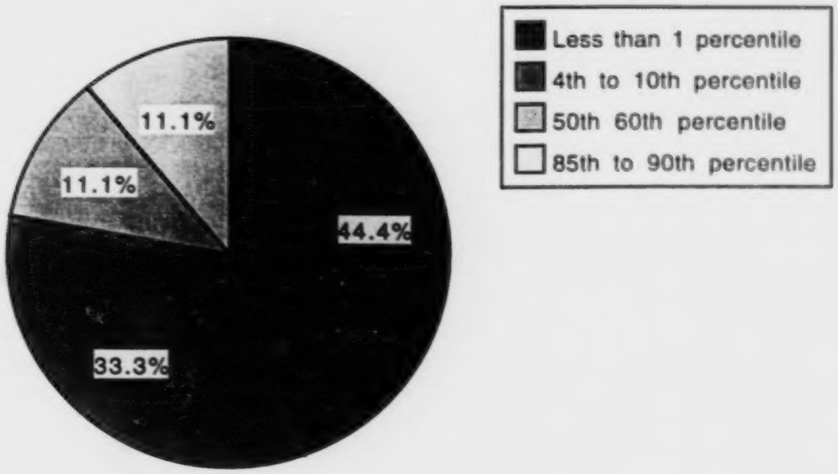

Figure 3. Targeted class A essay subtest percentile scores for Test of Written Expression, September 1996.

Teacher observations of the students reveal that the test of written expression is indicative of current performance levels for students. The student interviews and attitude surveys depict the present motivation toward writing. An assigned writing task motivational checklist (Appendix F) was used within the first two weeks of school. Fifty-five percent of the students began writing within 30 to 45 seconds. Forty-four percent of the students began to draw or doodle. The teacher observed that the writing showed little focus in regard to content. Legibility was difficult due to improper spacing and poor spelling. Seventy-seven percent of the students were unable to write a complete sentence. Attempts were no more than a two-statement paragraph. Ability to work independently, without seeking adult attention for reassurance of written

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attempts, was non-existent in 88% of the students.

In summary, the targeted class A students have a positive attitude toward writing regardless of their current abilities in written expression, or their lack of good parental modeling for the creative expression types of writing. This may be due to their lower I.Q. scores in that they may not have the intellectual capacity to determine good and poor writing for themselves or that writing in a cursive/printing mode is not the only type of writing. The low I.Q. and low academic functioning may be a determining factor in their positive attitude toward writing. EMH students often times aim to please, especially during the one-on-one settings, such as the individual interviews. Also the low I.Q./low academic functioning combination may be indicative of what the research has found in regard to first through third grade students in that adverse attitudes toward school situations, including writing, do not occur until the later years. The students in the targeted A class have not yet reached those later years, at least where mental ability and academic functioning are concerned. Therefore, when considering the above data and information, it can be stated that the targeted class A students exhibit inadequate writing skills.

Targeted Class B

The targeted class at school B is a self-contained behavior disorder (BD) class. As the data in table 3 indicate, two of the three students qualify with BD as their primary handicapping condition. One student qualifies with learning disabilities as his handicapping condition. Students' IQ's range from 89-121. Students' academic abilities range from a 1.6 grade level to a 6.6 grade level in reading decoding and reading comprehension, as noted on current IEP's.

The students receive individualized instruction in the academic areas of reading, social studies, science, spelling, language arts, and math. Students are also instructed in the areas of social skills and drug abuse. Students follow a daily

Table 3

Targeted Class B Student Population Defined

Student	IEP Qualified	I.Q. (last 3 years)	Recent Case File Scores Reading Decoding	Reading Compreh.
Male A	LD/BD/Speech	97	1.6	1.9
Male B	BD	121	6.6	6.6
Male C	BD	89	5.9	4.9

classroom point system and an individualized behavior management plan according to current IEP's and teacher observations.

A parent writing survey (Appendix A) was sent home to the parents of targeted class B during the first week of school. All three of the surveys were returned. According to table 2, all three of the parents responded that formal writing skills should be part of the daily classroom curriculum. Of those three, two responded that 15 minutes of the daily curriculum be spent on writing, while only one parent of targeted class B responded that 30 minutes be devoted to writing. One parent indicated that they promoted writing at home. He/she did so by helping his/her child with writing and writing letters. Two of the parents gave no response in regard to promoting writing at home. All three of the parents recorded that their child did not enjoy writing activities.

The three students were given the Knudson Writing Attitude Survey (Appendix B) during the first week of school before any writing activities had been assigned. A negative writing attitude is also indicated in the results of the Knudson Writing Survey (Appendix C). The preference for writing vs. other home activity category indicates that all three students prefer the other activities to a writing activity. The only writing that was enjoyed by the students was writing notes to friends.

When asked to assess themselves as writers, again a negative feeling toward writing was evident through responses to the survey. Only one student felt that he got good grades on writing assignments, while two reported a neutral response. Two felt that they were writers, and all responded that their parents liked what they wrote. Of the three students, two felt that they could write better then they do, and that writing a whole composition was a difficult task for them. All of the targeted class B students responded that they could write a complete paragraph, but felt that it was not important to be a good writer in order to be successful in school.

Again, throughout the personal attitude toward writing for school and job category of the Knudson Writing Attitude Survey, a negative attitude toward writing was present. Of the three targeted students, none indicated a desire for more writing time during the school day, and all disliked writing assignments. The students did agree that the ability to write was an important aspect for getting a job. The above information is also evident in Figure 4.

The Test of Written Expression (TOWE) was given to the students in a group testing situation. Student A began the item portion of the test on item number 20. Students B and C began the item portion with item 30. These were chosen on the basis of their grade level and the instructions in the TOWE manual. Testing was complete when each individual student reached a ceiling of five consecutive items missed. The essay portion was also given as a group testing situation.

The data in appendix E can be summarized for the purpose of this research. Student A scored in the 2nd percentile on the item section of the Towe. Student B scored in the 81st percentile on items and student C scored in the 5th percentile. Figure 5 further illustrates this information.

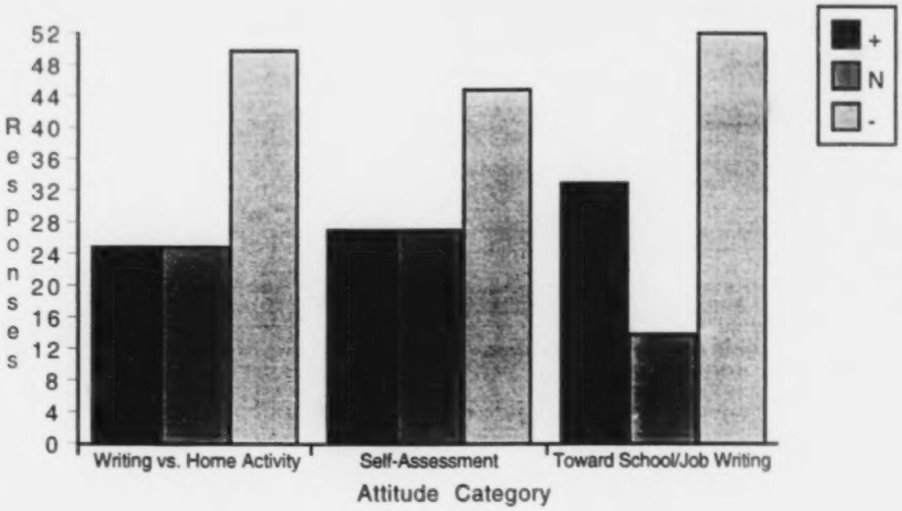

Figure 4. Categories and responses of student attitudes toward writing for the targeted class B during the first week of the 1996-97 school year.

On the essay portion of the TOWE, student A scored in the 5th percentile; student B the 39th percentile; and student C scored in the 18th percentile. This information is further illustrated in figure 6.

According to the TOWE manual, student A achieved in the very poor performance level on the item portion and in the poor performance level on the essay portion. Student B achieved in the above average performance level on the item portion and in the average level on the essay portion. Student C was within the poor performance level on items and below average level on the essay portion of the TOWE.

The Jenkins Writing Survey (Appendix G) was given the students as a pretest activity. Only one of the students considered himself a writer. All three of the students

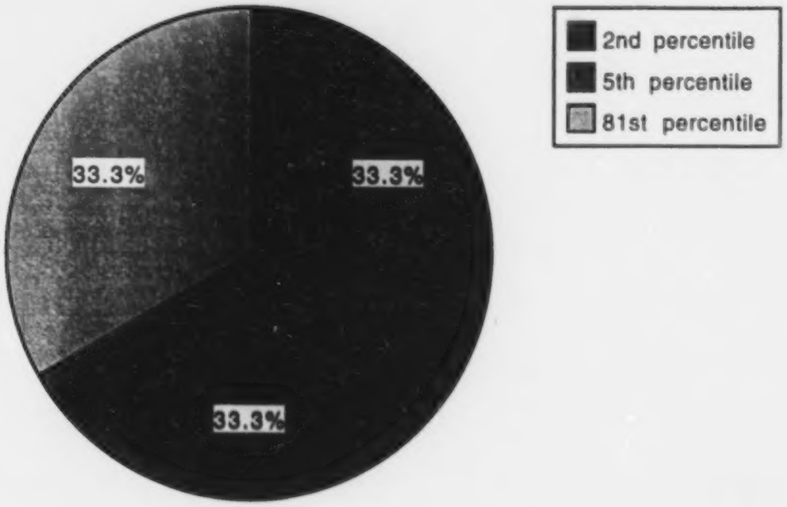

Figure 5. Targeted class B item subtest percentile scores for Test of Written Expression, September 1996.

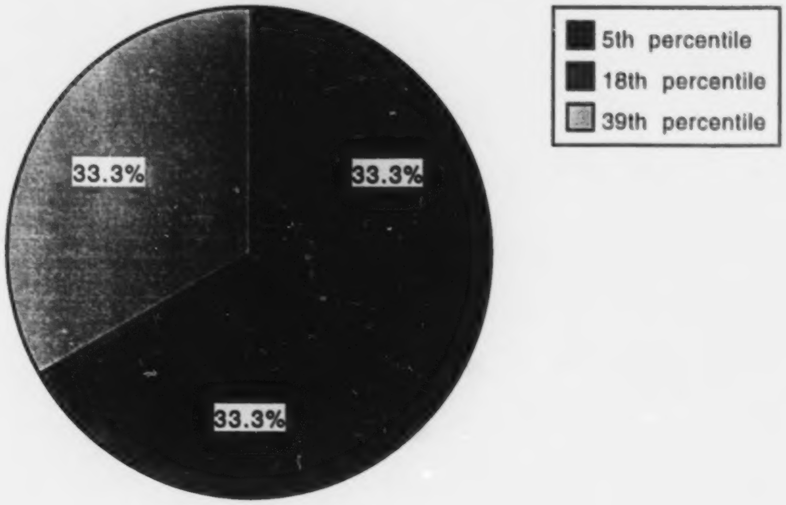

Figure 6. Targeted class B essay subtest percentile scores for Test of Written Expression, September 1996.

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Table 4

Targeted Class B Jenkins Student Writing Survey Results

Survey Questions	Number of Target School B Students
Are you a writer?	
yes	1
no	2
How do people learn to write?	
parents	1
school	2
Reasons why people write	
to communicate	1
to express themselves	1
because they want to	1
What a good writer needs to do in order to do well	
practice writing	1
school and write	2
How does your teacher determine which pieces of writing are good ones?	
you correct them	1
written appropriately	2
In general, how do you feel about what you write?	
good	1
don't like	2

n = 3

displayed a negative attitude toward writing, but were aware that they must practice writing at school in order to become a writer. Each of the students had a different belief as to why students write. Table 4 summarizes the data.

In summary, the students have a negative attitude toward writing. This is most likely due to their lack of school success. Their inappropriate behaviors, lack of consistency, both at home and at school, and a lack of structured environment that is so often needed for a behavior disorder student to be motivated and successful in school, may play a part. The test results of students' writing abilities are indicative of their current functioning levels. Even though one student has the potential to show positive writing, he lacks the motivation to do so. An Assigned Writing Task Motivational Checklist (Appendix F) was used on five different occasions during September. The checklists indicate that students were unwilling to write even when they could choose their topic. Student A even became outwardly enraged with the assignment in that he became physically violent toward the teacher. Student B shows some writing ability, but lacks the initiative to display any independent writing effort. Therefore, when considering the above data and information, it can be stated that the students exhibit inadequate writing skills.

Targeted Class C

The 22 targeted students at school site C are in a regular first grade classroom. There are 14 boys and eight girls in the class. One student has an IEP for language arts and is instructed by an inclusion aide 30 minutes daily. The ethnic make up of the class is 86% White, and 14% Hispanic. The Hispanic students speak Spanish at home and do not have any language difficulties at school. The students come from various socio-economic backgrounds. Thirty-one percent qualify for the Federal Free Lunch Program and 36% are from single parent families. Eighteen percent of the students have Attention Deficity Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD).

The classroom teacher is responsible for all academic subjects. Reading Recovery instruction is given to the two lowest students by a trained Reading Recovery teacher 30 minutes a day. Reading Recovery offers reading and writing strategies on a one-to-one basis for first grade students only. Six students receive remedial reading instruction from a reading specialist three times a week.

A permission form explaining the action research project was given to all 22 parents along with a parent survey. All 22 parents granted permission for their child to participate in the action research project. Sixteen parents completed or partially completed the survey. The data given in Table 2 are for the 16 parents who responded to the survey.

Generally, the parents feel positive about formal writing skills being taught as part of the daily curriculum. Fifty percent of the responding parents feel that 30 minutes or more a day should be devoted to the teaching of writing. Twenty-seven percent feel that 15 minutes a day is adequate.

Parents promote writing at home by doing various writing activities. The majority of parents, 88%, help with teaching their child how to form the letters of the alphabet correctly. Parents send notes to their child's teacher and write thank you notes. Parents, also, encouraged writing by making lists. Few parents stress creative writing.

Seventy-five percent of the responding parents believe that their child enjoys writing. Various activities are chosen by the children. The children like practicing handwriting and writing notes to friends. The children also model writing when playing. Parents encourage writing, but not the creative expression or expository forms of writing.

The students of targeted class C were given the Knudson Writing Attitude Survey (Appendix B) individually by the classroom teacher or the inclusion aide.

The students have a positive attitude towards writing. All of the students feel that their writing is good and that their parents enjoy what they write. Fifty percent of the students already consider themselves good writers. Sixty-eight percent enjoy writing a composition (long story). When given a choice, 68% of the students would not mind writing in place of watching television and 82% would choose writing over listening to music.

Generally, the students would like more time to write in school. They prefer to choose their own writing topic. The students would rather write than fill in a workbook page even if it meant doing a report.

The students want to improve their skills. They acknowledge that their writing is at the beginning stages and being judged by first grade standards. Eighty-six percent of the students said that they need to improve their writing skills. They feel that writing is important for school and future job success. The combined responses of positive, negative, and neutral, are divided into three categories and displayed in figure 7.

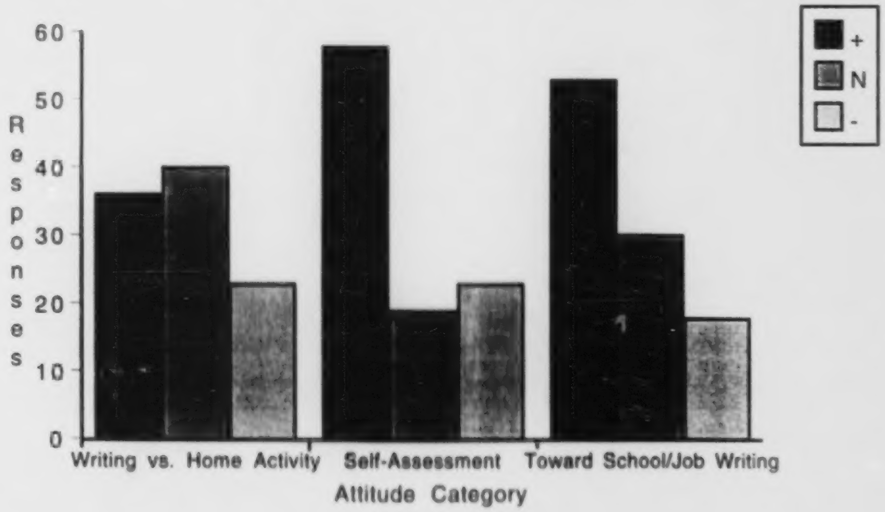

Figure 7. Categories and responses of student attitudes toward writing for the targeted class C during the first week of the 1996-97 school year.

All site C students were given the TOWE individually by their classroom teacher. The students began at entry item one which corresponds to their grade level. The testing stopped when five items in a row were missed or when the ceiling of 30 items was reached. Targeted C students were not given the essay portion of the test. The essay section is not age appropriate. Item subtest data, according to percentile, is depicted in figure 8.

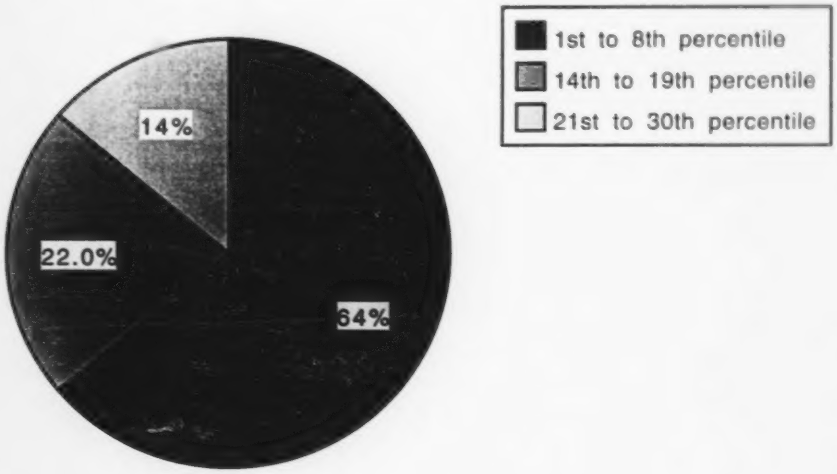

Figure 8. Targeted class C item subtest percentile scores for Test of Written Expression, September 1996.

The targeted students have not been exposed to formal writing skills. Their previous school experiences include: learning the letters of the alphabet, correctly writing their first name, and using invented spelling to tell about a picture that they have drawn.

The scores reveal that 91% of the students have difficulty with the test content, and 9% of the students are already demonstrating average writing skills. The standard scores are based on a certain number of correct responses and then are age normed.

Norms for ages 6.6 through 14.11 years are used. Targeted C students range in age from 6.0 to 7.4 years. Nationally, students who are administered the TOWE are ranked by their standard score and corresponding percentile and not by age.

Given this information, 45% of site C students had standard scores of 76 or higher, which reflect that they answered a minimum of 15 items out of the ceiling of 30 items. Forty-five percent of the students answered 10 to 14 items correctly with a ceiling of 30 items. The test results show that 9% of the students are average, 6% are below average, and 64% are poor or below. The grade level equivalent for all 22 students is below first grade, third month and the TOWE was administered during the first month of first grade. The classroom teacher agrees that the TOWE reflects site C students' writing abilities as beginning writers who have not had the opportunity to develop writing skills. The low scores are a consequence of their age and a minimal amount of schooling and not their academic ability.

All 22 students in the targeted class C were given the Jenkins Survey (Appendix G) as an interview. Nineteen students consider themselves writers. This answer is based on the fact that they could write their first name and the letters of the alphabet. Two students did not consider themselves writers because they could not write a story. One student considers himself a "sometimes" writer because he was still learning how to write. Of the 19 students who consider themselves writers, 13 learned to write from their parents, three learned at school, one taught himself, and two did not know how they learned to write. The two students who do not see themselves as writers will learn to write in school and the "sometimes" writer will learn from his parents. Site C students use writing the letters as a criteria for being a writer.

Seven students, the majority, said that a reason to write was to be able to write letters and notes. Four students chose writing books and stories as a reason to write, and five students said that writing would help them in school and with their reading.

One student each chose list making, writing reports, learning to spell, and a desire to learn to write your name as reasons to write. Three students could not give any reason for writing. When asked what a good writer needs to do in order to write well, eight students said to practice everyday; three said to have drawing skills; two said to have supplies; two said time in school to learn to write; one said to know how to spell; one said to be able to reread the writing looking for mistakes; one said good handwriting was needed; and one said to try his/her best. Three students did not know what a good writer needed.

The students were not sure how a teacher decides which pieces of writing are good. Eight students answered that they did not know and four students said that if it could be read, the writing was good. Three chose correct letter formations as a criteria. Two students each chose neatness, good drawing and coloring, and no erasing or mistakes would make writing good. One student thought that the teacher would look for writing like a teacher's.

In general, the students feel very positive about what they already do for writing. Nineteen students gave comments of "happy", "fine", "good", "nice", and "I like it" about their writing. One student said he felt funny about writing, and two students did not know how they felt about their writing.

The answers to these interview questions say that the students in targeted class C believe that writing is correctly forming your letters and being able to write your name. They believe themselves to be writers because they can do these skills. They do not understand what teachers look for in judging a piece of writing since 36% did not know and 18% said that if they could read their words and the teacher could read their words (invented spelling included) then the writing is considered good. Forty-one percent of students rely on writing to be the mechanical skills of letter formation, neatness, coloring and drawing, and 5% see good writing as something an adult/teacher could do. Eighty-six percent of the students are very pleased with the writing skills that they have now. They see themselves as writers and are ready to improve upon the skills that they do have. Thirty-six percent think that writing every day and practice will make one a good writer. The students are motivated and ready to meet the challenges to become writers.

Probable Causes

A child's home background can influence failure or success (Cunningham & Allington, 1994). Studies have shown, according to Durkin and Snow (as cited in Jenkins, 1996) that children who have been read to at home during preschool years have larger vocabularies and experience a greater degree of success in learning than children who have not had a history of literacy experiences. According to Newkirk (as cited in Jensen, 1993) children learn about the written language at a very early age and in a very systematic way, often before they learn to read. The fact that many children come to school without a home environment that pursues reading and writing activities through adult modeling and interaction of literature-rich immersion of print is definitely part of the cause of students being poor writers (Jenkins, 1996). When a home environment lacks reading and writing activities, children often enter school without self-discipline habits that aid in learning to write well (Jensen, 1993).

"Writing is the gateway to literacy, not reading" (Jensen, 1993, p. 291); however, the classroom environments for teaching writing do not show this. "The sources of disadvantage and school failure lie as much with what schools do as with what the children bring to the schoolhouse door" (Means & Knapp, 1991, p. 283). Writing comes naturally to children; however, they are seldom invited to write during the school day. Classroom environments do not understand complex and interrelated influences of writing and writers - the cognitive, social, cultural, psychological, linguistic, and technological influences (Jensen, 1993). Students are not enthusiastic about writing because classroom environments do not provide the significant rituals to keep it alive over time (Calkins, 1994; Cunningham & Allington, 1994). The environment is lacking in predictability and therefore is not a safe place for students to take risks (Bunce-Crim, 1991).

Writing instruction has rested on tradition (McGettigan, 1987). The teaching of writing has become stagnant with the repetitiveness of learning isolated mechanical skills and concepts. The societal demands of high test scores causes teachers to focus on perfect form rather than the important components of writing. Assessments are forcing teachers to confuse the "tools" with the writing (Frank, 1995; Della-Piana, 1993). Skills are taught alone rather than within the context of where students are in their individual learning. Teachers hesitate to accept new methodologies and to consider new techniques. They teach the way they were taught. Moving away from the textbook curriculum of assigning writing tasks creates fear for teachers. Many teachers are not given the choice to choose different approaches to writing instruction. Administration forces the hand of many teachers as it believes in the myth that a quiet, studious, textbook-dependent classroom is where learning takes place. Traditional methods of grammar mastery, while ignoring content and meaning in writing, have suffocated writing programs (Funk & Funk, 1991; McGettigan, 1987). An acceptance of the idea that basic skills have become an "absolute prerequisite for learning the skills that we regard as advanced" (Means & Knapp, 1991, p. 284) cause writing problems (Frank, 1995). Hierarchically planned skills do not promise that what is taught is necessarily what is learned (Siu-Runyan, 1991). Resnick (1987) states (as cited in Taylor, 1989) that:

> Evidence is beginning to accumulate that traditional schooling's focus on individual, isolated activity on symbols correctly manipulated but divorced from experience, and on decontextualized skills, may be partly

> responsible for the schools difficulty in promoting its in-school learning goals. (p. 192)

According to Houston, Godrick, and Tate (1996) a skills first approach is not productive for learners with exceptionalities. Hasenstab & Laughton, 1982 and Marsh, Price, & Smith, 1983 (as cited in Farley, 1986) state that although curricula and texts have been published with the purpose of teaching writing to EMH students and educationally disadvantaged students, Morsink (as cited in Vacc, 1987) reveals that teachers find great difficulty when teaching written communication to adolescent mildly mentally handicapped (MMH) and educationally disadvantaged students. Students generally try to avoid writing, regardless of its ability to extend their communicative process, due to their previous encounters with the skills only approach. The idea that writing must be "right" makes reluctant students unwilling to write (McGettigan, 1987). MMH students and educationally disadvantaged students write the minimum in the minimum amount of time; therefore, proficiency is not acquired. Cohesive written structure and mechanics as well as readability of material is at a distinctive low performance level (Farley, 1986).

Curriculum schedules limit writing time hampering writing instruction as a process that takes time to learn (McGettigan, 1987). Writing is thus viewed by the student as a final product to do in a short amount of time - an overwhelming task for students, especially the young, the handicapped, and the educationally disadvantaged (Cummings, 1994). The initial stages of writing have not been taught to be tentative and open to revision (McGettigan, 1987).

Questioning the process or experiencing it first hand has been denied students as many classroom teachers do not feel that students have the higher-level thinking skills in which to decide or reflect on the writing process (Means & Knapp, 1991). The young, EMH, and educationally disadvantaged students do not receive essential instruction in metacognitive strategies (Buser & Reimer, 1988) as teachers misjudge what students are capable of doing. They, therefore, delay the challenging and interesting work. In the end, students are deprived the meaningful and motivating context for learning (Means & Knapp, 1991). Students, therefore, are given no purpose or ownership for writing. A transference of skills into individual lives does not take place (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1994; Cunningham & Allington, 1994; Taylor, 1989).

Students are further hampered because writing is being taught as a solo process. Teacher have not understood that collaboration is an important concept to be modeled so that teachers and students work together to improve writing skills. "Writing is, in reality, a collaborative endeavor" (Funk & Funk, 1991, p. 283). Writing conferences have not been used as a strategy to set the tone for a writing classroom (Kucera, 1995). Peer interaction, including play that allows young children, EMH children, and educationally disadvantaged children to become familiar with words and ideas, has been stifled. These children have not been encouraged to use language as a means to understanding that writing builds on what they already do well - talking and playing with peers (Daiute, 1989).

When students are unfulfilled by their writing experiences they form negative feelings toward writing (Glazer, 1991). Home and classroom environments play an integral part in creating those unfulfilling experiences and thus the lack of motivation to learn to write (Cunningham & Allington, 1994). A high value placed on success in reading and writing by parents and teachers causes anxiety, low self-esteem, and a resistance to learn. Parents and teachers often indirectly and unknowingly place punitive consequences upon the poor reader and writer. This causes rejection of writing because students are embarrassed and display feelings of inadequacy (Glazer, 1991). How students view themselves as readers and writers influences their attitudes about reading and writing (Farnan & Kelly, 1991).

Parents or peers who see reading and writing as unimportant activities will often "inflict" negative attitudes toward writing on the student. This conflict in status causes teacher values of writing to be rejected by the student, in hopes of resolving the student's internal conflict of value systems (Glazer, 1991).

Attitude affects all students' belief that writing is not only "doable" but is something worth doing (Calkins, 1994). More often than not, either at home or in the classroom, students are denied the invitation to accept for themselves the attitude that writing can both "serve as a satisfying outlet for their feelings and ideas" (Frank, 1995, p. 246) and as a means for understanding the world in which they live (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1994).

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Researchers are discovering that the teaching of writing has many values. Writing helps students discover and clarify relationships between new information and previous information. Students can learn better in all the disciplines by using writing to describe, explain, and apply new ideas. Donald H. Graves, a respected researcher of writing, believes, "When children cannot write, they are robbed not only of a valuable tool for expression but of an important means of developing thinking and reading power as well" (Toth, 1990, p. 16). Graves also declares that writing contributes to reading and comprehension (Toth, 1990).

According to Mellon (as cited in McGettigan, 1987) all children, except for the most severely, neurological impaired, can become writers. This is not to say that all students will master the skills of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling, but if teacher efforts focus the writing process toward content, or the philosophy of Writing to Learn, then "all students can flourish as makers of meaning" (McGettigan, 1987, p. 322).

Teachers have always taught writing. The writing process philosophy has been recognized by teachers as a viable method. Students grasp the writing process as they write for real purposes and audiences. Britton (as cited in Toth, 1990) states that students learn that writing is significant for their own learning and that effective communication is vital.

Writing to Learn is another philosophy giving teachers an opportunity to provide their students with more options to improve writing. Beginning writers tend to write from personal experiences. Writing to Learn builds upon this idea by allowing students opportunities to put their first impressions into words. Mature writing will develop as the students organize and reflect upon their experiences and previous knowledge.

The two philosophies can effectively be used together. Both methods use writing to improve learning and thinking skills. Writing to Learn encourages the use of daily writing as a matrix to formal writing. The writing process techniques are the building blocks for producing a finished written product.

The targeted classes will use the Writing to Learn techniques within the existing curriculum. The writing process will be formally taught within a writing workshop environment.

The Writing to Learn philosophy builds upon the premise that beginning writers write from personal experiences. Writing to Learn is a short method to express our feelings and experiences, and force ideas into words. Writing to Learn has six purposes: bonding student experiences and prior knowledge with subject context, discovering relationships among ideas, improving understanding and retention of school subjects, encouraging student made questions, arousing curiosity and motivation, and facilitating metacognitive aspects of self-discovery thereby helping students to see their own successes and weaknesses. Writing to Learn actively engages the learner. Previous experiences are used to clarify ideas, to make decisions, improve comprehension and generate meaning (Toth, 1990). Comprehensiveness of writing flows to all areas of the curriculum when the Writing to Learn philosophy is incorporated into the daily schedule.

The writing process is another practical strategy that all writers use. Writing involves not a single process but several, and the five stages of the writing process allow for the complexities that are involved in composing (Funk & Funk, 1991). The writing process lets students organize their own ideas and blend them with prior knowledge and real life experiences. Many students do not realize that writing is a craft-like process that can be broken into manageable stages.

Although the five stages may be called by different names, most writers agree that they involve prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Teaching these stages allows students not to see writing as an overwhelming final product, but as a process that will result in a final product (Cummings, 1994). The writing process encourages the use of the five stages so that all students can become more capable writers (Toth, 1990). Labbo, Hoffman, and Roser (1995) believe that the writing process is not to be thought of as five rigid stages to be followed exactly, but as a tool that allows students of all ages and abilities to move among the stages and to use them in overlapping ways.

Table 5 compares the writing process to the Writing to Learn philosophy. The Writing to Learn strategies can easily be integrated into the curriculum of the daily schedule of regular education and mentally handicapped students, while the writing process should be taught within the context of a more formal writing workshop classroom environment. This combination would promote the important aspects of writing as a process and not just a product.

In order to promote the Writing to Learn techniques and the writing process, the literature suggests creating a positive writing environment. The most effective way to immerse the student in the writing process in order to Write to Learn is for teachers to create writing workshops within the framework of their daily schedule. Writing workshops need to be set up so that students can expect consistency in structure and

Table 5.

Writing to Learn and Writing Process Compared

	Writing to Learn	Writing Process
Definition	A short, impromptu expression written quickly while giving shape and form to ideas produced form experience	Long, planned composition written with the purpose of achieving clarity and acquiring correctness through manipulation of content and language
Audience	Written primarily for self with the intent of clarifying ideas while learning is occurring	Written primarily for a predetermined audience with the intent of producing a product
Writing Development	Fosters fluency and clarity through frequency and motivation to capture rapidly emerging ideas	Enhances writing development through repeated drafts, shows growth from initial concept to finished product
Grading	Requires little instructor time or extensive evaluation because the aim of the writing is for personal gain through discovery and expression of ideas	Requires instructor time for response and conference while the product is in process; needs teacher time for grading and assessment of completed writing project
Intention	School districts use writing to learn in a district-wide effort to move an entire school district forward by improving thinking, reading, and writing in all subject areas	School districts use writing process in the English department with the express purpose of improving students' ability to write by producing a sequence of drafts that lead to a finished product

Toth, M., (1990). Hello writing process, meet writing to learn! In the Professional Handbook for the Language Arts: World of Language (pp. 27). Illinois: Silver Burdett & Ginn.

expectations (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1994). Avery (1993) states that "a predictable environment is conducive to the high-risk activity of learning" (p. 6). Writing that is ongoing gives writing a meaningful purpose and a goal for the writer. Goals and expectations need to begin with what Giacobbe and Atwell (as cited in Avery, 1993) were the first to speak of - time, ownership, and response. From the first day of school, writing must be established as a daily activity. When students know they are going to write daily, they begin to think about writing when they are not writing. Writing skills will begin to emerge as students are given the time to write (Hillocks, 1986) and an independence and interest in writing will become inherent in students (Fisher, 1991) when given the consistent invitation to self-select their topics during both structured and free writing time (Baskwill, 1993; Routman, 1991). Open-ended writing activities allow these students to gain the desired motivation to write (Smith and Good-Zavagno, 1991).

Time to write is especially important for young students. "First efforts need not be letter perfect" (Kantrowitz, 1989, p. 55). Students should be given the opportunity to know writing is a part of what they will do for a variety of reasons. Oral language does not need to be developed before young students can acquire written language skills. These skills develop together and often times drawing pictures of a story is the actual writing of the story. Teachers need to recognize the importance of drawing as a natural progression to writing literacy (Britsch, 1993). "It is very helpful if we can focus on what children are doing rather than on what we wish they would do" (Calkins, 1994, p. 66).

Time to write or draw, as well as student choice of topics and subjects, will promote a sense of pride and ownership in writing and thus a positive attitude about the activity of writing. Research demonstrates that children want to be the "owners of their writing" (Toth, 1990). Farley (1986) maintains that all writers are capable of choosing topics appropriate for their age. Routman (1991) suggests that classroom climate contributes to students' willingness and eagerness to write.

"For many children, writing simply has no connection to everyday events" (Graves, 1995, p. 58). At risk children and handicapped children often complain about having nothing to write about. Graves (1995) advocates an approach called "Reading the World" (Appendix H). Teacher demonstration of this approach of jotting down events that happened the day before and then elaborating on one particular event in more detail shows students that everyday occurrences can give them something to write about if we wonder about it more closely.

"Ownership, a goal of process teaching, develops when students have a high degree of involvement with their learning. It produces strong learners who are honest writers and aggressive readers. . . ." (Avery, 1993, p. 7). Atwell (1987) states that a writing workshop structure requires that all students are regularly and purposefully invested in writing about something that has meaning to them - something that will give them appropriate feedback. It is important to give students a sense of authorship. No other method gives students a better goal or purpose for their writing and editing of that writing than the purpose of finalizing a piece for publication (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1994; Routman, 1991). This needs to be done early in the school year, before the end of October (Calkins, 1994). Publishing is a way of sharing student work with an audience. "This is a time for celebration when students can gain recognition and take pride in the product that came from all their careful efforts" (Cummings, 1994, p. 28). Publication is a powerful teaching tool when it predictably happens. Publication connects reading and writing in that it includes the writer in the "world of authorship" (Calkins, 1994, p. 266).

Writers desire this feedback, or response, in order to achieve success in their writing (Hillocks, 1986; Routman, 1991). This response can be from peers, informal teacher observations, reflection time with peers and/or teachers, and keeping writing files or portfolios of each student's writing (Baskwill, 1993; Labbo et al., 1995; Hillocks, 1986).

The structure of teacher response or conferencing should be an interactive process that provides opportunities for teachers to directly teach about language conventions, sense of story, types of writing, and concepts about print. (Kucera, 1995). This feedback on writing helps students to grow as writers. "These teaching moments do not follow a specified sequence but evolve from the teacher's understanding of the students' needs and engaging in instruction precisely at the point of that student need" (Button, Johnson, & Furgerson, 1996, p. 447-454). "Students' mistakes, errors, and miscues can tell us about our students - what they know, what they are struggling with, and what we need to teach them" (Siu-Runyan, 1991, p. 102). According to Whittaker and Salend (1991), feedback should be positive both orally and in writing, and negative aspects of the writing should be directed to the student as questions. This gives the students an opportunity to reflect on their writing and to become engaged in their learning. Calkins (1994) lists examples of teacher questions to student writers:

> Can you tell me about how you wrote this?
>
> How's it going?
>
> What problems have you encountered while writing this?
>
> When you read over your text, how do you feel about it? If you were to lay out all your finished drafts and then sort them into piles of "very best," "good," and "less good," which pile would this be in? Why?
>
> What are you planning to do next? If you were going to do more with this piece, what might you do?
>
> What kind of writing are you trying to do? Do you have a sense of how you want your writing to be in the end?

How long have you been working on this draft? (p. 226)

Response also needs to take the form of peer feedback. Support from classmates and the opportunity to share ideas with and receive ideas from their peers, gives many the support and self-confidence that they need to write and take risks (Baskwill, 1993; Cunningham & Allington, 1994). Checking on the effect their writing has on an audience of their peers helps students to learn what others are thinking about, what works well, what may work better, what is effective, confusing, ordinary, or surprising. It helps the student writers to grow in their understanding of their writing (Frank, 1995).

Student response groups may be formed and gathered at the end of each writing workshop "in hopes that they will help one another explore meaning, structure, and style, and hold one another to the standards of good writing and the requirements of the assignment" (Tipper & Malone, 1995, p. 77). Whittaker and Salend (1991) describe a need for teachers to structure the student response groups so that peers will know what is expected of them when responding to other student writers. In 1983 Graves and Hansen (as cited in Whittaker & Salend, 1991) stated that establishing rules for sharing a draft of student writing will create an "Author's Chair" that will help peers make appropriate and effective comments toward the piece and will guide the author to keeping to his role of carefully listening to all comments, accepting all comments, seeking clarification of comments, and paraphrasing his own understanding of the feedback given (Appendix I).

In order to promote consistency within the writing workshop, the teacher must model many of the expectations, techniques, and methods that are inherent in creating a writing workshop environment. Teacher and adult modeling of writing is probably one of the most important aspects to keep in mind when setting up a writing workshop in the classroom setting (Cunningham & Allington, 1994; Frank, 1994; Routman, 1991). "Children need to know adults who write" (Atwell, 1997, p. 17-18). "The teacher should never ask of the student more than the teacher would be willing to do" (Hillocks, 1986, p. 84).

Cunningham and Allington (1994) agree and think that students who watch a teacher think aloud, add on, invent-spell, organize and reorganize while composing "feel better" about their own works in progress. Active practitioners encourages others to write (Hillocks, 1986). "Young writers learn best in the company of an adult who willingly guides and eagerly joins them in the processes of writing" (Frank, 1995, p. 25). Smith and Good-Zavagno (1991) stress that learning will not be transferred throughout unless the writing is modeled through specific teacher action. All stages of the writing process need to be modeled and practiced daily. Modeling includes the teacher's writing as well as exposing students to authors and how they use the writing process. Just posting the five stages of the writing process and discussing their importance and meaning will not teach writing. Teachers need to instruct the students in the five steps of the writing process and model all the five stages in order to allow the students to internalize the five stages (Zemelman et al., 1993).

"Only when I became a writer with students and colleagues could I see that doing writing process was not valid" (Routman, 1991, p. 164). If teachers want students to embrace the writing process, then writing purposes, contexts, and audiences to share their writing with must also be authentic. Students need to value why they write, and see a reason for clarity, organization, and completion. Teachers who model writing and expose students to writing models through literature prove to students the value of writing as a serious tool for thinking and learning (Routman, 1991).

According to Means and Knapp (1991) cognitive psychologists recommend that teachers should model the higher-order thinking processes in order to build metacognitive skills in an external demonstration so that students will, as Calkins (1994) believes, ask questions, notice, wonder, and connect their learning to the world around them. Teachers sharing their writing with their students (Routman, 1991) is an important writing workshop ritual and one that inspires students to risk the process. Creating rituals for sharing writing (Calkins, 1994) in order to demonstrate to students the purpose of writing as a means to making sense out of one's life gives students the sense that writing is more than an assignment.

Routman prefers the term "percolating" for the ongoing, thinking, reconsidering process that takes place throughout the writing process. Percolating includes outlining, brainstorming, note taking, and anything that you do before writing. According to Jeffers (1994), students need inspiration to write and although students write best about what they know, teacher/class brainstorming models an action that students can take with them in order to inspire their writing. Dialogue between teacher and learner is central to the cognitive instruction (Means & Knapp, 1991) and effective and proficient questioning enhances the higher level reasoning as well as comprehensive reflection of students (Bruneau & Cass, 1986).

The thinking process needed for solving problems within student writing can effectively be demonstrated with the use of graphic organizers. These include webs, which focus on specific aspects of topics; KWL charts that help students think about what they know, what they want to know, and what they learned; and data charts or Venn diagrams for comparing and contrasting information about two or more things. Time lines are useful devices when students need to order and sequence information, and story maps are effective in helping to guide student thinking when making the connection between reading and writing (Cunningham & Allington, 1994).

"Because writing is inextricably linked to reading, students can develop ideas for their writing from reading (Whittaker & Salend, 1991, p. 127). This is one of the most powerful connections in helping students become better writers, and research clearly shows this (Cunningham & Allington, 1994). "Writers need to read" (Atwell, 1986, p. 17-18). Exposing students to different genres and immersing them in the literature of that genre is the best way for students to learn to write in that genre. Teachers should stop and discuss the way an author has created a mood, setting, or character description in a world of fiction. Students then can note what authors do and apply it in their own writing. Literature provides the best models of language. An insightful reader can become a writer (Routman, 1991). The constant reading and sharing of writing gradually brings students to realize what constitutes good writing (Frank, 1995). A writing workshop environment of time, ownership, and response must incorporate a literature-rich connection of reading material to a student's writing efforts (Atwell, 1987).

Atwell (1987) also clearly states, and Calkins (1994) would agree, that the important structure and expectations of a writing workshop environment can be effectively and repeatedly taught in the class mini-lesson. Mini-lessons are a writing workshop teacher's method for adding information to the class "pot" (Calkins, 1994). Mini-lessons can take many forms and should be stimulated from the students' needs as well as from activities that a teacher can enhance through the written word. "Ideally, mini-lessons should support the less able youngsters while also celebrating and praising the upper level of what children are doing" (Calkins, 1994, p. 202). Mini-lessons should be no longer than five to seven minutes long. Mini-lessons are a profitable way to teach mechanics. Mini lessons, conducted one time a week, on topics such as how to form letters, spacing, capitalization, periods, and mechanics in content give students successful writing and editing skills (Baskwill, 1993; Hillocks, - 1986; Routman, 1991). Mastering the lesson is not the goal as lessons can be repeated and have proven to be more effectively learned when they are kept short and repeated often (Atwell, 1987). Mini-lessons often times come from the teacher-student conferencing of individual writing as well as the students' journals. See Appendix J for possible mini-lesson ideas.

The daily activity of journal writing, according to Yinger (as cited in Wedman & Martin, 1986) invites students to attain new depths of personal understanding by writing about what they know, what they feel, what they do, and why they do it. It also allows immediate, personal, and written feedback from a literate model (Farley, 1986) while giving the student a safe avenue in which to stress content over mechanics. "The primary objective of the journal is the acquisition of writing as a familiar, comfortable habit" (McGettigan, 1987, p. 323). The teacher's response should offer suggestions as to content of the student entry while being sensitive to the student's feelings. Many of the Writing to Learn ideas stem from the students own journals (Toth, 1990). The dialogue journal puts the teacher in touch with where the student is on a daily basis (McGettigan, 1987).

Student growth in an interactive writing environment can be assessed through the use of writing portfolios. Portfolios may include dialogue journals, writing drafts, self-assessments (Appendix K), checklists (Appendix L), questionnaires (Appendix M), and rubrics (Appendix N). Organized and purposefully selected collections for the portfolios help students and teacher evaluate the writing instruction as well as the writer's efforts, goals, and growth. This formal and informal knowledge can be communicated to the parents and administration (Farnan & Kelly, 1991; Frank, 1995).

Farnan and Kelly (1991) believe that another means of ongoing evaluation should take the form of informal observations:

> Informal observations, when children are engaged in writing and unaware that they are being evaluated, provide an excellent picture of growth in written language. Teachers can begin by making detailed anecdotal notes about

> students. The more one looks, the more one will see. (p. 258-259)

"Understanding literacy from the child's perspective involves disciplined and systematic observations of children as they read and write in and out of classroom settings" (Taylor, 1989, p. 186-187). Calkins (1994) further agrees and gives teachers examples of when and what to observe:

> I notice when a writer keeps on writing past the lunch bell, past my invitations to gather for a class meeting. I notice when a writer says, "Let me finish this" or "Wait, one sec!" I notice when my kids clap when we announce writing time. I notice when the energy for writing goes up . . . or down. I notice when my kids move independently from finishing one piece of writing to initiating another. I notice when a writer brings her draft to a peer conference with specific questions in mind for her readers. I notice when kids respond to a piece of writing by talking not just about the subject but also about the text, about the way the writer has rendered the subject. (p.328)

Informal observations help to encourage teachers to assess the methods they use to engage students in the idea of valuing writing as a life-long pursuit (Calkins, 1994).

Project Objectives and Processes

> As a result of creating a writing environment in which students are given the opportunity to write to learn, during September 1996 to January 1997, the targeted students will exhibit effective writing skills, as measured by student portfolios, teacher journal, and a post-published test.

In order to accomplish the project objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Develop materials that enhance the writing process in a "Writing to Learn" methodology.
2. A series of writing activities that promote writing skills both in

quantity and quality will be developed and modeled throughout the curriculum.

3. The focus of the learning environment will be devoted to enhancing student writing skills through time, ownership, and response.
4. Ability level of individual students will be recognized and will direct future instruction in order to promote individual growth in the areas of complex and higher level thinking skills.

As a result of creating a positive attitude toward writing, during September 1996 to January 1997, the targeted students will be able to recognize the writing process as a life-long pursuit which enhances their real-life learning, as measured by teacher-constructed parent and student surveys, published writing attitude test, student portfolios, and teacher journal.

In order to accomplish the project objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Students will be taught the five stages of the writing process and will be able to effectively use the stages in order to complete a final product.
2. Students will be able to effectively reflect upon the five-stage writing process and assess its effects in decreasing their writing frustration while increasing their success.

Project Action Plan

I. Writing to Learn Environment which includes use of Writing Workshop
    A. Classroom Arrangement
        1. Writing Tools
        2.. Reading Selections

3. Writing Displays

B. Classroom Schedule

1. Targeted Class A - 80 minutes daily

    a. Individual Writing

        1. Student choice
        2. Journal writing
        3. Theme oriented
        4. Creative writing (DoodleLoops) (Appendix O and P)

    b. Mini Lessons

        1. Class environment, structure, and set up
        2. Rules for writing
        3. Record keeping
        4. Technology
        5. Spelling words, vocabulary
        6. Plot and character
        7. Connection to other subjects
        8. Five-step writing process
        9. Editing
        10. Skills a writer needs
        11. Lessons for reader from writer
        12. “Read the World” format
        13. “Author’s Chair” format
        14. Portfolios
        15. Reasons to write
        16. Genres
        17. What authors do

18. How authors think
19. Write about what you know
20. Peer response
21. Places to publish

c. Writing Conference
   1. Student reads piece
   2. Teacher clarifies area of where assistance is needed
   3. Teacher directs student to specific qualities of piece
   4. Teacher notes what has been done successfuly

d. Individual Reading
   1. Chapter books
   2. Student published texts
   3. Science and social studies research books

e. Group Share
   1. Student takes author's chair
   2. Student reads piece.
   3. Group listens and offers constructive criticism and/or praise
   4. Author uses information to guide future writing
   5. Outside-classroom audience

f. Cooperative Learning Writing Activities
   1. "Wheel" game for vocabulary review (Appendix Q)
   2. Character Creations
   3. Style
   4. Tone

g. Direct Instruction Writing Activities
1. Content based
a. Autobiographies
b. Reflect on daily lessons
2. Curriculum connections
a. New vocabulary logged in binders
b. Topics chosen for individual writing
c. Graphic organizers in science and social studies depict connections to student writing

h. Metacognitive Skills
1. Evaluate
2. Predict
3. Decide
4. Identify
5. Organize
6. Sequence
7. Compare
8. Contrast

2. Targeted Class B - 50 minutes daily
a. Individual Writing
1. Student choice
2. Journal writing
3. Theme oriented
4. Creative writing (DoodleLoops) (Appendix O and P)

b. Mini Lessons

  1. Classroom environment, structure, set up
  2. Five stages of writing
  3. Characteristics
  4. Title
  5. Setting
  6. Plot
  7. Keeping to the topic
  8. Editing
  9. Publishing
  10. Book making
  11. "Author's Chair"
  12. Brainstorming for topics
  13. Times to write
  14. Peer editing
  15. Picture books
  16. Reasons to become a writer
  17. Paragraph forming
  18. Detail in story writing
  19. Technology

c. Writing Conference

  1. Student and teacher read piece together
  2. Student and teacher edit piece together
  3. Student makes corrections
  4. Student makes a final draft of written piece
  5. Teacher completes logs regarding written piece

        6. Student completes logs regarding written piece
    d. Group Share
        1. Student takes the author's chair
        2. Student selects one piece to read
        3. Group shares part that was of interest to them
    e. Cooperative Learning Writing Activities
        1. DoodleLoops
        2. Adding writing to picture books
        3. Group written stories
        4. Think, pair, share
        5. Treasure maps
        6. Me shirts
        7. Greeting cards
    f. Direct instruction writing
        1. Content based
            a. Social skills
            b. Autobiographies
        2. Curriculum connections
            a. Reflection on silent reading
            b. Webbing social studies
            c. KWL social skills
            d. Time line social studies
            e. Graphic organizers of science lessons
            f. Energy pyramids
            g. Social studies booklet

g. Metacognitive Skills

1. Evaluate
2. Predict
3. Decide
4. Identify
5. Organize
6. Sequence
7. Compare
8. Contrast

3. Targeted Class C - 45 minutes daily

a. Individual Writing

1. Student choice
2. Journal writing
3. Theme oriented studies (Appendix R)
4. Creative writing (DoodleLoops) (Appendix O and P)

b. Mini Lessons

1. Writing workshop guidelines
2. Letter spacing in words
3. Spacing between words
4. End of sentence punctuation
5. Quotation marks
6. Speech balloons
7. Proper use of capital letters
8. Reasons to write
9. Author biographies

10. Plot
11. Character development
12. Five step writing process
13. Types of writing
14. Nouns
15. Verbs
16. Adjectives
17. Peer conference guidelines
18. "Author's Chair"
19. Write Away Word Processing

c. Writing Conference
    1. One-on-one with the teacher
        a. Student reads the writing
        b. Skills taught are discussed
        c. Student and teacher note strengths and weaknesses
    2. Peer conferences

d. Individual Reading
    1. Student reads own works
    2. Student reads classmates' work

e. Group Share
    1. "Author's Chair"
    2. Writing read to other grade levels
    3. Writing placed in library

f. Cooperative Learning Writing Activities
    1. Reports

            - 2. Riddles
            - 3. Poems
        - g. Direct instruction writing
            - 1. Content based
                - a. Author biographies
                - b. Reflect on daily lessons
                - c. Mechanics
            - 2. Curriculum connections
                - a. Vocabulary and parts of speech
                - b. Reports in science and social studies depict connections to student writing
        - h. Metacognitive Skills
            - 1. Evaluate
            - 2. Predict
            - 3. Decide
            - 4. Identify
            - 5. Organize
            - 6. Sequence
            - 7. Compare
            - 8. Contrast

- II. Expectations
    - A. Teacher Role
        - 1. Target Teacher A
            - a. Provide specific time to write
            - b. Provide books to read and materials to write with

- c. Encourage respect of writing rules
- d. Provide students with reasons to write
- e. Model good writing and enthusiasm for writing
- f. Teach good writing skills and steps
- g. Write with students
- h. Provide group activities for students to work cooperatively
- i. Provide response time so students can share writing
- j. Provide ways for students to publish writing

2. Target Teacher B
    - a. Provide daily writing time
    - b. Teach necessary writing skills
    - c. Encourage writing
    - d. Provide a variety of writing activities
    - e. Provide a variety of publishing materials
    - f. Provide conference time when necessary
    - g. Model writing
3. Target Teacher C
    - a. Provide specific daily time to write
    - b. Provide books to read
    - c. Provide writing materials
    - d. Role model good writing
    - e. Teach the mini lessons
    - f. Give positive feedback
    - g. Share teacher writing
    - h. Share teacher reasons for writing
    - i. Provide cooperative writing activities

- j. Provide conference time
- k. Provide outlets to share studetn writing
- l. Publish student writing
- m. Hold one writing conference weekly with each student

B. Students' Role

1. Target Students A
    - a. Follow writing workshop rules
    - b. Write during specific writing time
    - c. Follow five-step writing process
    - d. Keep track of writing
    - e. Seek guidance from peers
    - f. Share writing
    - g. Publish writing
2. Target Students B
    - a. Participate in writing workshop
    - b. Have necessary writing materials
    - c. Keep all writing materials in writing notebook
    - d. Complete writing logs after formal writing piece
    - e. Participate in writing conference
    - f. Share writing through "Author's Chair"
    - g. Edit writing
    - h. Publish writing
3. Target Students C
    - a. Follow the writing workshop guidelines
    - b. Use the entire writing workshop time for writing
    - c. Understand and practice the five-step writing process

        - d. Use peer conferences
        - e. Sign up for teacher conferences
        - f. Work cooperatively during group writing
        - g. Use the "Author's Chair"
        - h. Complete at least one published piece

- III. Teacher Modeling
    - A. Shared Teacher Writing Samples - weekly
    - B. Reading for Ideas
    - C. Think Out Loud
        - 1. Group brainstorming
            - a. Thinking games: word associations, memory games
            - b. Make a list of ideas pertaing to subject
            - c. Teacher models his/her way of finding ideas
            - d. Combine pictures with writing - DoodleLoops
        - 2. Graphic organizers
            - a. Web
            - b. T-chart
            - c. Scale
            - d. KWL
            - e. Compare/Contrast
            - f. Story Mapping
            - g. Sequence
            - h. Recording
            - i. Classifying Chart
            - j. Character Matrix

- D. Teacher Actively Engaged in Writing - daily
- E. Verbal Impromptu Review of Reasons to Write

IV. Writing Process

- A. Demonstrate Five-Stage Writing Process (Cummings, 1994)
    - 1. Pre-Writing
    - 2. Drafting
    - 3. Revising
    - 4. Editing
    - 5. Publishing
- B. Use and Practice Five-Stage Writing Process
- C. Assess Five-Stage Writing Process

V. Components of Literature

- A. Characters
- B. Plot
- C. Dialogue
- D. Narrative Voice
- E. Theme
- F. Titles
- G. Fiction
- H. Non-fiction
- I. Beginning, Middle, and End
- J. Mechanics
- K. Various Formats
- L. Various Kinds of Literature

VI. Developing Student Attitudes Toward Writing

- A. Teach the Value of Writing Time
  - 1. Incorporate Individual Student Self-Discipline
    - a. State writing time rules
      - 1. No disturbances
      - 2. Everyone writes
      - 3. Write for entire time period
    - b. Practice and review writing rules
  - 2. Incorporate Writing as a Life Skill
    - a. Means of communication
    - b. Personal pleasure
    - c. Express feelings - conflict resolution
    - d. Reduce stress
    - e. Enhances reading
- B. Teach Ownership of Writing by Decision Making (Kirby, Latta, Vinz, 1988)
  - 1. To share or not to share
  - 2. Topic choice
  - 3. Revise or put away
  - 4. Publish
  - 5. Reflect on authorship
- C. Teach the Skill of Response (Gray, 1990)
  - 1. Self-evaluation
  - 2. Peer editing
  - 3. Writing conference with teacher
  - 4. Classroom group share

VII. Teaching Strategies
  A. Mini Lessons
  B. Cooperative Learning
  C. Graphic Organizers
  D. Whole Group Direct Instruction
  E. Individual and Group Writing Activities
  F. Computer Use
  G. Metacognitive Skills

VIII. Record Keeping
  A. Group Goals
  B. Individual Goals
  C. Status-of-the Class (Atwell, 1987) (Appendix S)
  D. Individual Conferences Log (Atwell, 1987)
  E. Portfolios
  F. Writing Folders
  G. Rubric Checklists
  H. Group Observation Checklists
  I. Pretests
  J. Post-Tests
  K. Grades

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, published tests will be used to identify student writing growth. A writing attitude survey will be given and portfolios of student work will be maintained throughout the intervention. Scoring rubrics of writing assignments will be developed as well as checklists for student motivation toward the writing process. Parents will be surveyed as part of the assessment process.

Chapter 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of the action research project was to increase effective writing skills of students. The implementation created a writing workshop environment that stressed the "Writing to Learn" philosophy for 7th and 8th grade special education students (Target Class A), intermediate behavior disorder students (Target Class B), and regular education first grade students (Target Class C).

The individual targeted classroom environments were arranged so that writing tools, reading selections, and writing posters were displayed. The individual classes developed a daily writing workshop schedule that included daily time to write. Participation was expected of all students regardless of academic ability. Individual teacher-student writing conferences took place. Daily teacher observations were noted. Mini-lessons evolved naturally from individual student needs. Students had the opportunity to choose to write their own pieces as well as teacher-selected topics. Pieces included creative writing, content reports, journal writing, letters, stories, speeches, etc. Writing was owned by student authors through publication. Response to writing from both peers and teachers was an integral part of the writing workshop. The teacher/researchers infused the "Writing to Learn" philosophy into daily academic instruction. Children's literature, as well as newspapers and magazines were an important aspect of the students' learning to write. The students needed to be exposed to authentic writers, their struggles, and their successes. Teacher/researchers modeled the specifics of the writing workshop, the five-stage writing process, response to writing, as well as incorporating writing as a life skill necessary to reflect upon one's learning.

The five stages of writing were formally taught early on during writing workshop. These included prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The five stages were taught in order, but the students often used the stages as need dictated. The five stage process is a guide to help writers write and to communicate their ideas. This guide is shown in Appendix T.

During the first week of school, guidelines were established that required each student to have at least one weekly conference with the teacher, and sometimes, daily individual writing conferences were held. The conferences were student lead. When the students completed a formal piece of writing that they wanted to publish, they would request and participate in a student-teacher writing conference, held as close as possible to the time that the student finished his/her piece. The student would first read his/her piece of writing to the teacher. The teacher and the student then edited the writing piece together. Corrections were made, and the student made a final draft of the written piece. The teacher and the student each individually completed logs regarding the written piece, noting content and skills taught as well as any skills used correctly. Conference forms used for target class A, B, and C are found in Appendix U, V, and W respectively. The teacher's main role was that of listener. Students needed to talk about their writing. The teacher often responded by saying, "This is what I understand about your writing". This allowed the student to explain anything that was not understood, and placed the teacher in a supportive role. Giving praise and acceptance was another main teacher role and one that was influential in helping students continue their writing efforts. The conferences were time consuming but necessary. The individual attention given to the students let them know that the teacher valued their writing.

Mini-lessons, a term developed by Lucy Calkins (1986), were used to develop the students' writing skills and usually came out of the teacher-student writing conferences or daily observations of the student writing. Mini-lessons are short lessons on any of the skills needed to be a writer as well as rules and/or expectations of the writer. The teacher/researcher would choose a concept that the students needed and model that concept. Mini-lessons did not take more than ten minutes and focused on one concept. Mini-lessons can be conducted individually during a writing conference, for small groups, or for the entire class. Mini-lesson topics are listed in Appendix J.

Targeted classroom A realized that mini-lessons with special education students, were sometimes too brief. Many of the skills that were needed in order to feel like writers could not be taught with just a mini-lesson. Skills taught could only be justified with longer periods of time. Therefore, the teacher/researcher began to either increase the length of the daily mini-lesson or would incorporate a writing mini-lesson into other curriculum during the day.

"Author's Chair" was used weekly to give the students the opportunity to share their writing with the rest of the class and any invited others. A chair in front of the room was designated as the "Author's Chair". The student who had the chair had the attention of the entire class. They also had the option of inviting someone in to hear their piece. Students had a choice as to which piece they wanted to share. Examples of completed pieces included simple drawings, single words or short phrases, or completed stories or letters. Even the shyest of students, or those with serious speech and/or reading problems, enthusiastically took part in this activity. Guidelines were made by the students and teacher for listening and commenting on others' writing.

These included looking at the speaker, being a listener, using the word "I" and not "you" for comments, and thinking of questions one might want to ask the writer. Comments like, "I like the way they said what it did", made a growth in student confidence possible and evident. Furthermore, the sharing of writing helped build the community of writers within the individual classrooms.

Peer conferencing was another way for students to share their writing with peers as well as to practice thinking out loud. Discussing ideas and getting help in editing made for a noisy writing workshop time, but greatly contributed to the community of writers.

DoodleLoops, a creative writing technique published by the Good Apple, was a fantastic teaching strategy for creative writing. A DoodleLoop is a tool to stimulate the creative writing process. The students are given a shape that they are to improve upon, or change into something else. The students then add a short story that relates to their DoodleLoop. Enthusiasm for DoodleLoops increased each day. This activity helped to increase creative writing expression. The visual, hands-on activity of creating something seemed to help students be better able to put their thoughts into words (Appendix P).

The teacher/researchers discovered numerous ways to motivate students to publish. Enthusiasm for sharing their writing dramatically increased when students held their finished piece. Students published their work through the use of student-made materials and/or word processing techniques. These included individual and class books. Published pieces were displayed in the class or elsewhere in the school. One student made the comment, "I think I'll give this to the library so everyone can check it out".

Conferences, observations, mini-lessons, and published pieces helped to make writing evaluations an ongoing process. However, formal evaluations were completed in a conference-type manner with the students at the mid-quarter and again at the end of each quarter. Portfolios were used to collect conference notes and writing pieces.

Graphic organizers were an effective way to integrate the writing across the curriculum; teach the components of literature, such as characters, plot, and sequence; and organize and evaluate thinking. Webbing, KWL, time lines, booklets, pyramids, and compare and contrast graphics were used in social sciences, science, and during social skills instruction. Story webs, character matrixes, and sequence charts were used to help the students understand sequence and character development. Using writing to reflect on what they learned gave students a feeling of power in being able to knowledgeably make up their minds about their learning, instead of just being passive players in the way things were.

Students needed opportunities to practice thinking. The teaching of metacognitive skills was modeled and promoted through questions posed throughout the day and within other curricula. The teacher/researchers related all subject matter back to the learning of writing. According to Betty Gray, "One of the best ways to teach thinking is to teach writing, for writing itself is a mode of thinking. It is a way to communicate knowledge" (Gray, 1990, p. 15).

During the daily writing workshop schedule within the "Writing to Learn" environment, the teacher's role was to create an atmosphere of acceptance and respect for the student's ideas and attempts at written expression. The teacher welcomed individuality and responded with enthusiasm. Every opportunity was used to expose the students to different styles of writing and to the necessary skills required for students to become successful writers. Teacher modeling was a major component of incorporating writing as a life skill. The teacher/researchers used a variety of opportunities to show students that reading and writing are things that they choose to do with their lives, outside the school day.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Target Class A

The post data for target class A was completed in January on eight of the nine students, as one student left the research environment during the third week of research. In order to make evaluative observations of student motivation toward writing, the teacher/researcher periodically completed the "Assigned Writing Task Motivation Checklist" (Appendix F). Fourteen observations were done from September 27 to January 23. For research purposes the observations were divided into month one, which included four observations from September to October; month two, four observations from November to December; and month three, five observations in January. The results of these observations are summarized in figure 9. The graph depicts that the observation of students' positive motivation toward assigned writing tasks increased from 50% in month one to 65% in month two, and finally to 88% in month three.

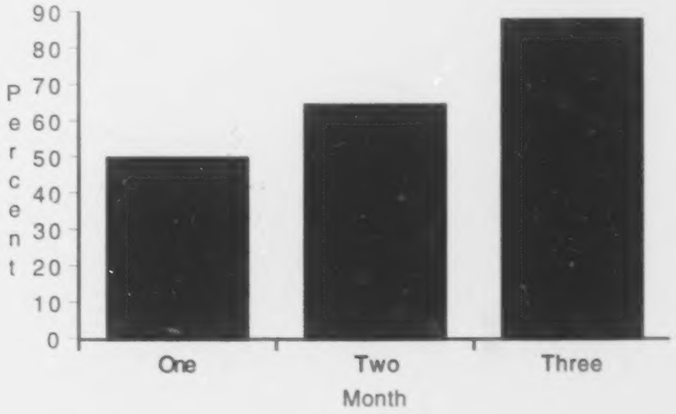

Figure 9. Observations of class A students' positive motivation toward writing during assigned writing tasks.

The teacher/researcher felt that the growth in student motivation toward writing occurred because of the overall consistency and structure of the daily writing workshop environment. The schedule of time to write, ownership of writing, and response to writing appeared to promote the students' positive attitude toward writing. It is interesting to note that the positive student motivation toward writing always coincided with writing that had been preceeded with an art activity.

The Knudson Interview was given to each of the students as a reflection to be completed in their dialogue journal. The teacher/researcher felt that students' responses would be more honest if done within the safety of their dialogue journal. Reflections indicated that almost all of the students think of the word "writing" as an assigned practice time of printing or cursive handwriting. This reflection is surprising to the teacher/researcher in that practicing handwriting was a very small part of the weekly schedule. The question that prompted students to reflect on story writing or writing for school or job success emitted favorable responses from each of the students. Students felt that writing a story was a pleasurable task and that writing more often helped them to be better story writers. All the journal reflections concluded that one needed writing to do well in school and that the writing they had done had helped them to do so. Two of the journal reflections contained the students' sense of pride in their writing growth (Appendix X).

The parents of target class A students were given a post questionairre that, in its makeup, was less formal than the pre questionairre given in September. As with the students, the teacher/researcher wanted the parents to feel comfortable in being as honest as possible with their feelings about their individual student's growth of writing, both in performance and in attitude (Appendix Y). Twelve and a half percent of the parents chose not to respond to the questionairre. Sixty-three percent of the responses indicated a feeling of positive growth in attitude and improved performance.

Twenty-five percent of the responses indicated student performance to stay the same and attitudes to have been or continue to be "so-so". None of the responses indicated a negative attitude or decrease in performance. Figure 10 further depicts this information.

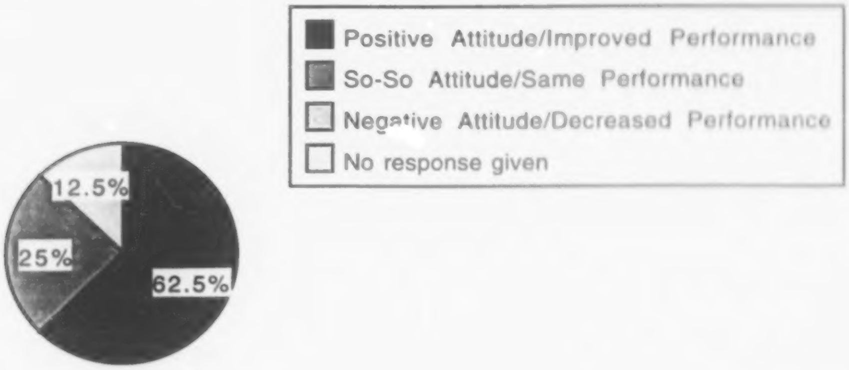

Figure 10. Target class A parent responses regarding their individual student's writing growth in regard to performance and attitude.

The Knudson Writing Attitude for Students, given in September, had shown that students entered the research environment with a positive attitude toward writing. Students were once again given the Knudson Writing Attitude Survey. Table 5 compares the responses of pre and post surveys in the attitude categories of writing vs. home activities, self-assessment, and toward school/job writing. The post survey results indicate a 47%, 59%, and 64% positive response in each of the categories respectively with a 25%, 22%, and 13% negative response in each category respectively. Only 28%, 19%, and 23% respectively in each category showed a neutral attitude toward writing in the three categories. The post data positive responses of the three categories are compared further in figure 11.

Table 5.

Pre and Post Data for Target Class A Knudson Writing Attitude Survey Results: Positive, Neutral, and Negative Responses.

Attitude Category	Pre-Data of Targeted Class A Students			Post-Data of Targeted Class A Students		
	+	N	-	+	N	-
Preference for writing vs. other home activity						
Rather write than watch T.V.	4	2	2	2	4	2
Writing notes to friends	5	0	3	5	1	2
Write letters to relatives and friends	3	0	5	5	2	1
Rather write than listen to music	3	0	5	3	1	4
Self-assessment of writing						
Get good grades on writing assignments	6	0	2	4	3	1
Parents like what I write	7	0	1	4	1	2
Am a good writer	7	0	1	3	3	2
Could write better than I do	5	1	2	5	2	1
Have to be a good writer for school success	7	1	0	6	1	1
Can write a complete paragraph	6	1	1	4	2	2
Do better in school when I take notes	6	1	1	6	1	1
Good at writing whole composition	3	0	5	5	1	2
Personal attitude toward writing for school/job						
Like to write if choose topic	5	1	2	5	1	2
Think writing is enjoyable	3	3	2	5	2	1
Rather write than read	5	1	2	4	1	3
Rather write an essay than fill-in-the-blank	4	1	3	5	1	2
Like to write science and social reports	5	1	2	4	1	3
Would like to have more school time to write	4	2	2	6	1	0
Expressive writing is important in getting job	6	1	1	6	0	2
	n = 8			n = 8		

+ (positive response)
N (neutral response)
- (negative response)

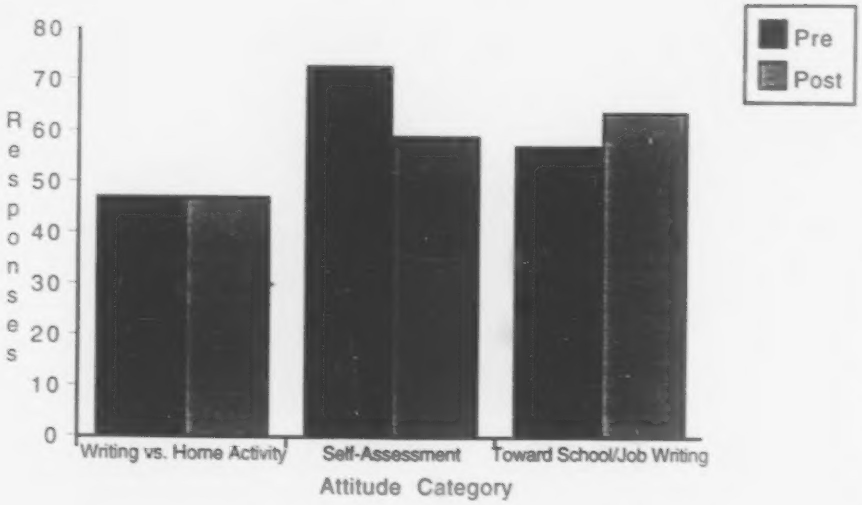

Figure 11. Pre and post data of positive responses of student attitudes toward writing for the targeted class A.

Even though the data shows no change in the attitude of students preferring writing to other home activities, the teacher/researcher did observe improved attitude toward writing at home through individual student comments noted on conference forms in student portfolios, as well as comments from parents through both ongoing informal conversations and from the responses of the final questionnaire given to parents.

The self-assessment attitude category decreased, but the teacher/researcher feels this is a truer representation of how students feel about themselves as writers. The students are now more knowledgeable about what makes good writing. The writing rubric, (Appendix N), the grading checklist, and the metacognitive lessons may all play a role in the students' increased knowledge and improved ability to self-assess their writing.

The increase in attitude of writing for school/job success was also seen in the students' journal reflections about writing. The teacher/researcher feels this improved attitude is greatly due to the consistent writing workshop environment as well as the efforts made to connect writing to all curricula.

The Test of Written Expression (TOWE) was re-administered to students in the same manner as was done for the pre-intervention collection procedure. Scores for this test, as stated in Chapter 2 are separated into an item score and an essay score. See table 6 for pretest and posttest data comparisons.

Table 6.

Target class A pre and post TOWE percentile scores and standard scores.

Student	Item				Essay			
	Pre		Post		Pre		Post	
	%	SS	%	SS	%	SS	%	SS
A	10	81	10	81	5	75	4	74
B	<1	60	1	68	<1	63	9	80
C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
D	23	89	10	81	58	103	35	94
E	18	86	10	81	7	78	42	97
F	7	78	3	72	<1	64	4	74
G	25	90	19	87	89	118	25	90
H	3	72	1	67	<1	64	4	74
I	3	71	<1	59	<1	63	6	77

When combined, item test scores indicate that 12.5% of the students fell within the less than one percentile. Seventy-five percent of the students fell within the first to tenth percentile. Twelve and a half percent fell within the eleventh to twentieth percentile. None of the students fell within the twenty-first to twenty-fifth percentile. Post item test scores can be compared to pre item test scores in figure 12.

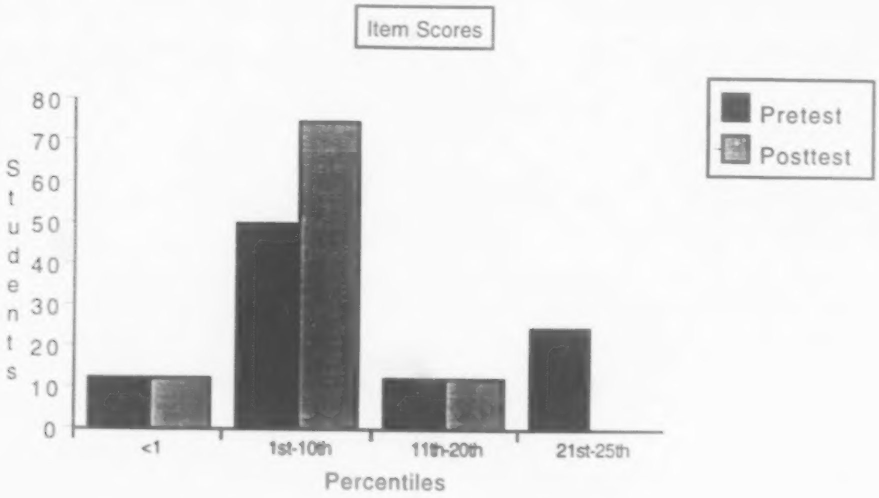

Figure 12. Target class A pre and post data for item test scores on the TOWE.

Essay test scores for the TOWE indicate that none of the students fell within the less than one percentile while 63% fell within the 4th to 10th percentile, and 37% fell within the 25th to 50th percentile. Post essay test scores can be further compared to pre essay test scores. See figure 13.

On an individual basis, only one-eighth of the students improved their standard scores on the item portion of the test which tested written expression skills. The teacher/researcher feels that this is due to the fact that the special education students needed to lose some of their old attitudes about themselves in connection to their

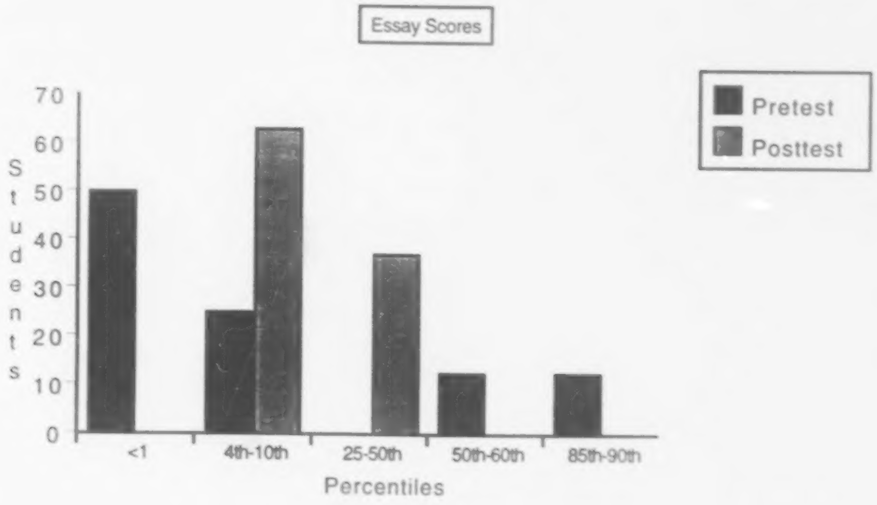

Figure 13. Target class A pre and post data for essay test scores on the TOWE.

writing before they would allow themselves to believe that they could be writers. In the beginning, students would not make even the simplest attempts to write, due to their frustration over their lack of skills. Special education students have a difficult time, due to short and long-term attention and memory deficits, learning basic writing skills, remembering them, and transferring them into various writing situations. Many of the students' abilities, as seen from the pretest data and observations, were comparable to that of a Kindergarten or first grade student. Therefore, as did Avery with her younger students, the teacher/researcher stressed quality of content, rather than quality of grammar and mechanics. Seventy-five percent of the students falling within the first to tenth percentile seems to indicate that students were uniform in their basic written expression skills.

On the contrary, on an individual basis, 75% of the students improved standard scores on the essay portion of the test. This may be due to the fact that students wrote and published at least six complete compositions. This is further seen in the comparison of 63% of the students falling in the fourth to tenth percentile and 37% falling in the twenty-fifth to fiftieth percentile versus the 50% that fell in the less than one percentile during September testing.

According to the TOWE's standard scores' descriptions, as depicted in the chart in Appendix E, the students' item test scores indicate that 38% of the students fell within the very poor performance level while 12% fell within the poor performance level, and 50% fell within the below average performance level. The students' essay test scores indicate that 50% of the students fell within the below average performance level and 38% fell within the average performance level. These standard scores descriptions can be compared to pre-data standard scores descriptions. See figures 14 and 15.

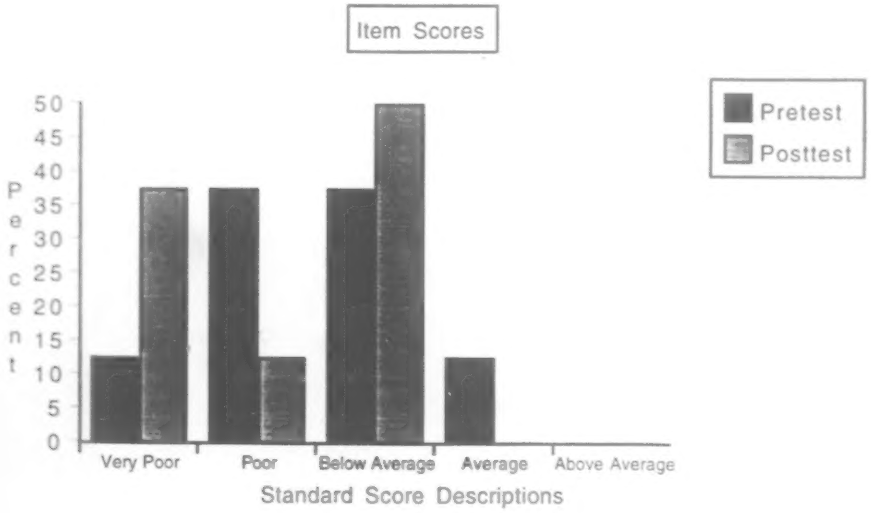

Figure 14. Target Class A standard score descriptions compared for item portion of TOWE.

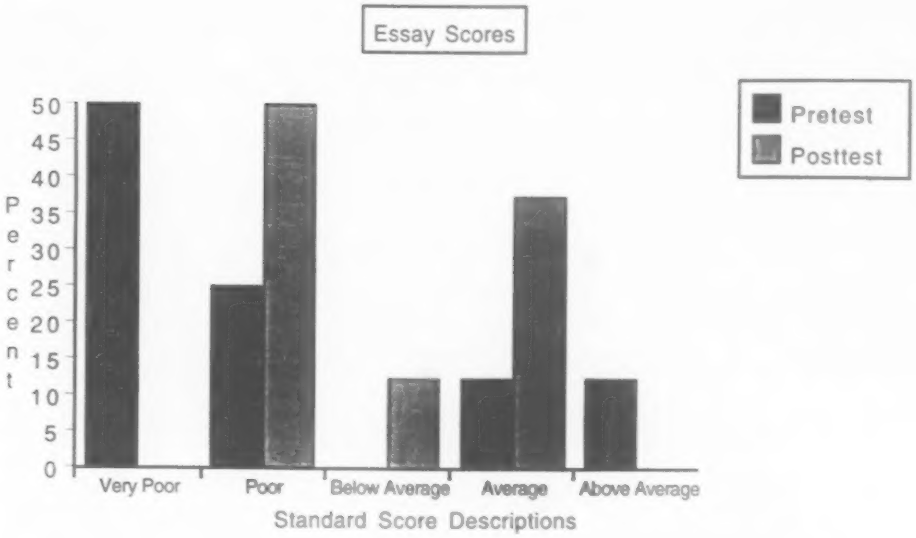

Figure 15. Target Class A standard score descriptions compared for essay portion of TOWE.

The teacher/researcher feels that the data in the above graphs may also be due in part to the fact that special education students consistently perform below the average in a testing situation.

The teacher/researcher used a Writing Workshop Grading Checklist, Appendix Z, for the purpose of evaluating individual students in regard to writing workshop binders, portfolios, growth in writing performance, and growth in writing attitude. The first and second quarter grades for students are listed in table 7. Thirty-seven percent of the students showed a decrease in grades. This may be due to the adverse behaviors of low self-esteems displayed by these students. Behaviors included truancy from school and defiance and hostility toward authority. Sixty-three percent of the students of target class A had improved their grades in the second quarter, with 3/5 of those showing an increase of at least 9 points while one student increased his score by 18 points. It is interesting to note once again, that 63% of the parents felt their students' writing attitude and performance had improved. The teacher/researcher feels the portfolio grades give a truer picture of the outcome of the writing workshop and "Writing to Learn" environment incorporated during the research period of September 1 to January 31.

Table 7.

Target class A individual student grades during the research period September 1 to January 31.

Student	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter
A	84	76
B	71	89
C	-	-
D	82	78
E	86	95
F	81	75
G	79	88
H	83	92
I	89	91

Target Class B

After five and a half months of implementing a writing workshop environment, the results of surveys, checklists, posttests, logs, self-assessments, skills lists, student writing notebooks, teacher/researcher journals, and teacher/researcher observations were reviewed and analyzed.

Student A moved during the implementation of writing workshop. Student B was present for pre and post data but was absent during 13 weeks of the intervention. The test of written expression (TOWE) was taken on the last day of the intervention. Student B, a fifth grade behavior disorder student, scored at the eighty-first percentile on the item portion during the pretest data. When given the TOWE as a posttest, the same student scored in the sixty-third percentile on the item section of the TOWE. The essay was also completed by student B. Pretest scores showed a score in the thirty-ninth percentile, with the same percentile score on the posttest essay. The same data was collected on student C, a sixth grade behavior disorder student. The TOWE pre item score was at the 5th percentile while the post item score was at the 21st percentile. The same student's pretest and posttest scores for the essay portion fell in the eighteenth and fiftieth percentiles respectively.

Parent writing surveys were used for pre and post data as shown in Appendix AA. Parent surveys given as part of the pre data collection reveal that each of the parents felt that their student did not enjoy writing activities. Neither parent responded to the post intervention survey.

The Knudson Writing Attitude Survey for Students was also given as a pre and post measure (Table 8). The pre intervention results showed that in the area of writing outside the classroom environment, both the students stated that they would rather watch T.V. or listen to music than write. Both students responded that when they did do writing outside the classroom it was in the form of writing letters to friends.

In the classroom environment one student responded that he got good grades on writing assignments; the other student was unsure. The students did reveal that they thought their parents liked what they wrote. When asked if they were good writers, one student said that he was not. One student felt that he could be a better

Table 8.

Pre and Post Data for Target Class B Knudson Writing Attitude Survey Results:

Positive, Neutral, and Negative Responses.

Attitude Category	Pre-Data of Targeted Class B Students			Post-Data of Targeted Class B Students		
	+	N	-	+	N	-
Preference for writing vs. other home activity						
Rather write than watch T.V.	0	0	2	0	1	1
Writing notes to friends	2	0	0	1	1	0
Writing letters to relatives and friends	0	2	0	0	2	0
Rather write than listen to music	0	0	2	1	0	1
Self-assessment of writing						
Get good grades on writing assignments	1	1	0	1	1	0
Parents like what I write	2	0	0	1	1	0
Am a good writer	1	0	1	1	0	1
Could write better than I do	0	1	1	2	0	0
Have to be a good writer for school success	0	0	2	0	2	0
Can write a complete paragraph	2	0	0	2	0	0
Do better in school when I take notes	0	1	1	2	0	0
Good at write whole composition	0	1	1	1	1	0
Personal attitude toward writing for school/job						
Like to write if choose topic	1	1	0	0	2	0
Think writing is enjoyable	0	1	1	0	0	2
Rather write than read	1	0	1	0	0	2
Rather write an essay than fill-in-the-blank	0	0	2	0	0	2
Like to write science and social reports	0	0	2	0	0	2
Would like to have more school time to write	0	1	1	0	0	2
Expressive writing is important in getting job	2	0	0	2	0	0
	n = 2			n = 2		

+ (positive response)
N (neutral response)
- (negative response)

writer than he was. The other student was unsure. Both students felt that it was not necessary for them to be good writers in order to be successful in school. They both responded that they could write a complete paragraph. One student said that he does better in school when he takes notes and that he was good at writing a whole composition. The other student had a negative response in these two areas.

When surveyed about specific areas of writing, one student stated that he liked to write if he was able to choose the topic. The other student gave a neutral response. When questioned if writing was enjoyable, both students gave a negative response. The students were divided on preferring writing to reading. Neither student liked taking essay tests or writing reports.

Post Knudson attitude survey results revealed that when questioned about preferring writing to activities outside the classroom, the students were again divided. One student had a neutral response when asked if he would rather watch T.V. than write; while the other student had a negative response. One student responded that he liked writing notes to friends while the other student was unsure. Both students had a neutral response about their preference for letter writing to relatives and friends. One student prefers writing to watching T.V. and the other student does not.

When surveyed about writing within the classroom, one student was unsure about whether he received good grades on his writing assignments; while the other student responded that he did not receive good grades on his writing. The same results were true when the students were asked if their parents liked what they wrote and if they were good at writing a whole composition. One student felt that he was a good writer. The other student felt that he was not. Both students stated that they could write better than they do, but that they could write a complete paragraph and do better in school when they take notes. Both students stated that they were unsure if they needed to be good writers in order to be successful in school.

When surveyed about their attitude toward writing, both students responded that writing was not enjoyable to them. Both agreed they would rather read then write, felt negatively about essay-type tests in comparison to fill-in-the-blank, did not like to do written reports, and did not feel the need for more time to write in school. Both students felt positively about writing being an important skill for getting a job.

A "Writing Task Motivational Checklist", as shown in Appendix F, was kept on the students by the teacher/researcher each time that the students completed a formal piece of writing for their writing notebook. Data determined that the students' motivation to write was often based on the assignment. When there was some type of drawing that the students could complete before they had to begin writing, they began the writing process right away.

Skills compiled from the "Skills Lists", (Appendix BB), showed that once a student mastered a writing skill, such as using capitals, including a title, remembering to indent, etc.., the student most often used that skill in their future writing assignments. Data from the skills list showed that both students increased the number of skills that they felt they had mastered during the writing workshop intervention.

After each piece of formal writing, the students completed a "Handwriting Checklist" (Appendix L). When compiled, the students' handwriting self-assessments showed that students did not feel that their individual handwriting had changed during the research period.

A teacher/researcher journal was kept weekly throughout the writing workshop intervention. Daily observations regarding the students' writing performance and writing attitude were recorded. The teacher/researcher believes that these observations give a more realistic picture of the growth in the areas of student attitude and written expression. The results showed a dramatic increase in both areas. Students became more eager to participate in writing workshop activities and took pride in the results of their writing; something they had not done prior to the implementation of a writing workshop schedule within a "Writing to Learn" environment.

Target Class C

In order to assess the effects of the writing workshop environment and "Writing to Learn" philosophy, the students were given the Knudson Writing Survey and the Test of Written Expression (TOWE) as part of the collection of post data. The teacher also held weekly conferences keeping a log of skills taught and used by each student. The students kept writing portfolios. The post data is for 21 students. One student moved during the research period.

The Knudson Writing Survey shows that students' attitudes showed slight increases for the three categories; writing versus home activity, self-assessment, and attitude towards school/job writing. Figure 16 below compares the total positive responses for the three categories.

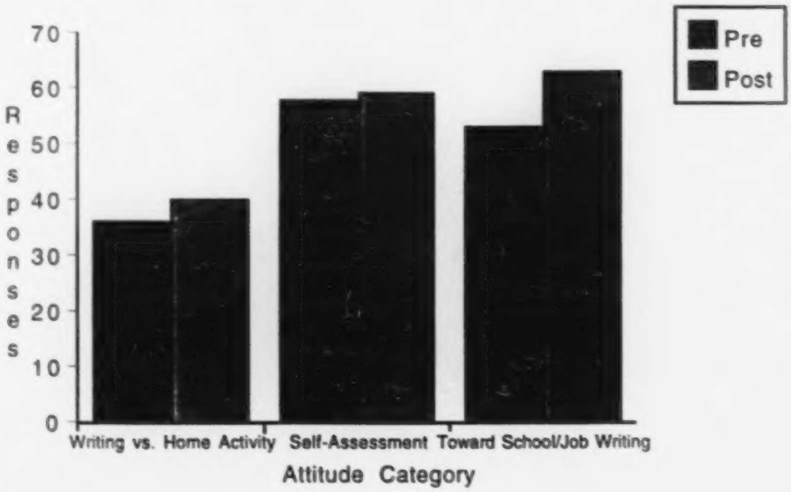

Figure 16. Pre and post data of positive responses of student attitudes toward writing for the targeted class C.

The survey shows that 40% percent of the students chose writing as an activity to do at home, 59% assess themselves as good writers, and 64% see writing as a skill needed for future school and job success. Appendix CC shows the positive, neutral, and negative responses for the entire survey. The survey reveals that some students decreased in the area of self assessment. These students are now comparing themselves to what they know about writing and real authors, and not to first grade standards. Students who are classified as having learning disabilities also compared themselves to the brightest students in the class and did not see their own improvement.

All of the students still like to write letters, but prefer to use their own style for writing a letter and not the correct personal letter format. The students did less writing at home and more television watching because their parents were more critical of their spelling and punctuation. Writing at school was more positive, invented spelling could be used and there was always an editor available. Once the students started to write in a school setting, parents still enjoyed their children's writing, but expected more of the written language skills to be mastered. Parents do not like invented spelling, reversal of letters, and lack of punctuation. These comments were discussed with the teacher at parent conferences and open house. The teacher sent an article taken from the students' basal reader, (Appendix DD), supporting the idea that when young children write, content is more important than the mechanics of good writing. This article was helpful to parents; especially parents who expect perfection.

The students also assessed their own writing by comparing themselves to the authors that were studied and any writing that they had read. The more capable students felt that they could still improve their writing, desiring to be like a real author; while the average and below students felt their writing was already good. Ninety percent of the students can now write a complete paragraph consisting of at least three sentences, and 57% can completely or sometimes write a complete story with a beginning, middle, and an end. At the beginning of the school year, none of the students could write a complete paragraph. The number decreased for writing a whole story from 50% at the beginning of the year to 29%. This decrease is due to the fact that writing a whole, complete story now means writing that is published, as opposed to beginning of the year thinking, that any writing done was a story.

There were three students who did not have as positive of an attitude as at the beginning of the year. These three students all have Individualized Education Plans. Two of the students have a learning disability in the area of written and oral language, and the other student has a behavior plan. As more writing was done by other students, the two learning disabled students saw themselves as inferior writers, yet their writing portfolios and teacher conference logs show growth. They insist on rating themselves by comparing themselves to other classmates and not their own progress. The behavior student developed an, "I don't care attitude towards school", and refused to participate in most activities.

All of the students were given the TOWE individually by the teacher. All students began at entry item one and the testing continued until the student missed five consecutive questions. Eighty-six percent of the students increased their scores, and 14% lowered their scores. The students with lower scores are the same students who also showed a decrease on the Knudson Writing Attitude Survey. Appendix EE compares pre and post TOWE scores for each student. Pre and post percentile scores are shown in figure 17.

The TOWE scores reveal that 86% of the students increased their score. Fourteen percent decreased by one to three percentage points. Fifty-two percent of the students are in the fiftieth percentile or above. The test data indicates that the students did improve.

Student portfolios, which included the weekly writing conferences and teacher logs, are the best indicators of improvement for all of the students. The teacher made analogical notes during the conferences as to content and skills mastered. Dated, they revealed when a skill was taught and if it was being used. The content writing of all students improved even though the written language skills were not always used. There continues to be a wide range in writing abilities, however, writing workshop was designed to give the students a wide range of writing opportunities to encourage the students to grow at their own rate. The students who were at the scribbling and drawing stage at the beginning of the year can now write a complete sentence using a capital letter and period. Students who were writing phrases can now write complete sentences, and sometimes paragraphs, using the correct written language skills. Students wrote and illustrated stories using the five stage writing process. All of these items are included in students' portfolios. The portfolio is the best tool for assessing writing.

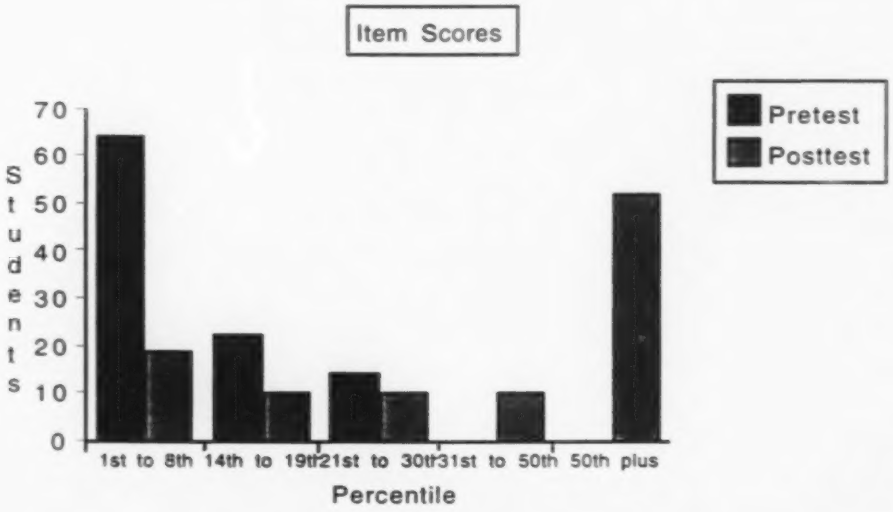

Figure 17. Pre and post data percentile item scores for the TOWE for Target Class C.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Target Class A

The students of target class A took part in a writing workshop schedule within a "Writing to Learn" environment for the period of time from September 1 to January 31. The target class A teacher/researcher can make the following conclusions and recommendations.

Students' attitude and motivation toward writing, even though positive at the onset, improved dramatically. This was documented both through observations and student conferences. Combining writing to an art activity, whether it be simply done or more complex, seemed to motivate students to become more involved in their attempts at written expression. A major, positive impact upon quality of student writing was made when art activities were preceeded with the time to write. The special education students' abilities were comparable to younger age students and, thus, they seemed to require that time to express themselves artistically in order to be able to initiate self-writing.

Students were unable to improve their test scores as indicated by the post data results of the Test of Written Expression. However, according to the grading checklist, second quarter grades showed that 63% of the students improved their first quarter grades by at least nine points. Portfolio collections revealed that students were making concerted attempts to take more risks in regard to the quality of their writing pieces. The writing workshop schedule allowed students to have the time to practice the writing that they felt intrinsically responsible for, and an audience in which they could gain positive and constructive feedback. The daily schedule contributed to the students' ability to feel free to write for the purpose of, as Calkins states, "making sense out of their lives". One student, in referring to his story, remarked, "I don't want to quit 'cause it's getting good". Journal entries revealed that students, even those having problems academically or socially, would still make efforts to "connect" with their journal; attempting to understand their personal choices. Feelings toward school, class work, friends, schedules, and parents, as well as hopes, fears, and heartaches of being a middle school special education student were expressed.

The teacher/researcher's efforts to connect writing to all the curricula helped students to not only be able to reflect on their learning, but to see how being able to write is important to school/job success. Students in target class A began to believe that being able to write would help them to achieve that success. The teacher/researcher feels that the writing binders played a role in helping students to keep track of their writing, to feel like writers by having a place to go to write, to evaluate their writing growth, to take risks with different writing, and to order their writing so that connections to other classes could be made. Substitute teachers found the daily schedule easy to follow. One substitute noted how nice it was to see middle school students viewing reading and writing as such ordinary things to do.

The teacher/researcher would highly recommend further research into the practice of a writing workshop schedule within a "Writing to Learn" environment for special education students. Gains made, even though insignificant in regard to standard scores of the TOWE, are considered significant by this researcher in that any gains made by middle school special education students, in the areas of academics and attitude, are ones to take note of.

The teacher/researcher feels that further gains would have been seen with the students if the research period had been longer. A longer time would have allowed for the teaching and reinforcing of more basic skills within the context of the individual abilities of the students. Modifications to the record keeping form of individual conferences aided the teacher/researcher in being able to more freely note variations in students' learning. The record keeping forms and portfolios support the teacher/researcher's belief that the students did improve their writing skills.

Stressing content rather than complex skills was a modification the teacher/researcher felt compelled to do in order to help students release their writing self-doubts. An important step for beginning writers is to just write and let the skills develop over time. Graphic organizers, although difficult to comprehend at times, assisted in this process as well as efforts that stressed the importance of writing in helping students' higher order thinking and reasoning skills.

Another modification to be considered for future researchers would be the author's chair rules and expectations. Many special education students have a difficult time reading, even when it is something they have written. Therefore, taking the time to have the teacher read the students' pieces prior to their reading of it, may help encourage the poor readers to not only take part in the author's chair experience, but to read more fluently. The teacher's reading of a piece would also help the listeners grasp the content of the piece and, thus, comprehend enough to give more qualifying feedback to the author, rather than the simple, rote statements of, "It's good", "It's nice", "I like it", or "It's too long".

Furthermore, the teacher/researcher would stress having the students complete shorter pieces over a shorter period of time. It is believed this would be more beneficial than writing one long piece over a longer period of time. Special education students may be able to gain and transfer learning of the basic writing skills and writing process if the pieces remain short. By having more pieces to write, students would be exposed to more variety and the repetitiveness would assist the students in their deficiencies in the area of short and long term attention span and memory. A rubric, depicting evaluation criteria on fewer writing skills, may also help students remain focused on specific areas being taught.

Mini-lessons are an excellent teaching strategy for enhancing basic writing skills within the context of student learning and are in keeping with individual goals and objectives of student IEP's. When necessary, mini-lessons can easily evolve into longer periods of direct instruction lessons in which cooperative learning can play a major role in the teaching and learning of writing skills and the writing process. This often times is necessary for students in special education.

Finally, in this teacher/researcher's opinion, encouraging parents to encourage their students to write at home should be a prerequisite for any future research of this particular area and with this particular population. Daily assignment sheets given to students at the end of each day by the teacher/researcher highlighted the daily requirement that students should read and write at home. They also provided a means in which to communicate ideas for reading and writing (Appendix FF). Student homework folders often contained items such as "10 Ways to Set the Write Attitudes" of "12 Write Ideas" (Appendix GG and HH). One parent wrote, "S. was talking last night about how fun school is and how he wishes he could go to school seven days a week. I think that's a grand idea".

Research regarding the teaching of writing for the special needs population is limited. The teacher/researcher of target class A feels that further research of special education students and writing is needed.

Target Class B

The writing workshop schedule incorporated into the "Writing To Learn" environment was a successful intervention used in Targeted Classroom B, an intermediate behavior disorder classroom. The teacher/researcher can make the following conclusions and recommendations.

On the Test of Written Expression, student B's scores went down on the item portion of the test. This may be due to the fact that writing workshop focused on the writing process and not on spelling and grammar, such as was indicative of the item portion of the TOWE. Student B's scores on the essay portion of the TOWE remained the same. This may stem from the fact that he was absent for thirteen weeks of the writing intervention. Even though student B was present to learn some of the writing process, he was not present to practice these skills daily. Daily practicing of the writing process, active participation in owning individual writing, and experiencing feedback gained from teacher and peers were all necessary research prerequisites for improved writing performance. Poor attendance definitely seems to play a part in a student's performance of writing.

Student C, a regular attendee, displayed an increased performance on the item portion of the TOWE, going from the fifth percentile to the twenty-first percentile. Student C's scores on the essay portion of the TOWE also show a dramatic increase. This growth was also evident in the student's daily writing performance, as seen from his portfolio collection.

The students' attitude during the intervention process increased. These results were not necessarily evident on "The Knudson Writing Attitude Survey." The teacher/researcher feels that the students' behavior disorder qualifications, as indicated on the individualized education plans, play a role in the way that students chose to respond to the survey. Observations completed during the research period depict a truer statement in the students' attitudes. When observed, students would begin writing immediately when the writing assignment was tied to something that was of interest to them or involved some type of drawing activity. The students increased their efforts; they would actually write without being coaxed to write more. The quality of their work had improved when compared to that at the beginning of the school year. When required to write more than just a paragraph or two, writing was no longer like "pulling teeth".

The students' writing skills also increased during the intervention. This was due to daily exposure to the writing process. The writing process became part of the daily curriculum. The students could relate writing to other areas of the study. They enjoyed writing stories and making charts in social studies and science. They could now correlate the process of learning to write with their other academic instruction.

The students felt that their writing skills had also increased. When they completed their skills list, they showed that they had increased their skills by listing more and more skills each time that they had mastered. They also showed this growth in their daily classroom writing.

Overall the teacher/researcher's journal was the best item used that showed the growth in the students' writing skills and their attitude. A weekly journal spoke of the increased willingness to write, increased attitude about writing, increased motivation and finalized pieces that were of a much higher quality than when the students first began.

The researcher would recommend that the writing workshop be used throughout the entire school year. A large portion of students' growth is more evident later on in the school year. The students really enjoyed keeping a writing notebook with all of their writing pieces. A system is necessary in order to check that the students keep all of their writing material, including their first draft as well as their final published piece. Author's chair is a must. The students really give a piece their best when they know that it has a purpose. Giving them the opportunity to share their writing with their peers gives their writing meaning.

Writing conferences between the teacher and the student also gave the student an incentive to write. This gave them the opportunity to see that the teacher actually read their piece and enjoyed it.

Target Class C

Writing workshop was a success for this classroom. The students looked forward to writing workshop time for the entire research period. If writing workshop was canceled for an assembly or field trip, the students still wanted to squeeze in writing time. This was one time during the day when all of the students could feel successful and learning was taking place.

The students' attitudes remained positive throughout the research period and is documented through the weekly conference logs, students' portfolios, and teacher observations. Motivation was heightened by author studies, DoodleLoops, and the teacher reading a minimum of three stories daily. Allowing the students to share their writing with others and being able to write for real audiences gave the students pride and recognition for all of their efforts. Published work, which the students chose form their writing portfolios, was a time of celebration and being able to say, "I am a writer."

The teacher/researcher recommends that writing workshop provides an authentic means for meaningful instruction in writing. The students were exposed to the conventions of spelling, construction of letters, punctuation, sense of story, types of writing, and reasons to write. Writing workshop provides many opportunities for teaching moments that evolve from the teacher's understanding of the students individual needs. These needs were met through mini-lessons and conferences. Writing workshop allows the teacher to effectively engage the students in the writing process using a literarcy-rich classroom, and writing that is personal and meaningful.

The TOWE test results also show that the students improved in their knowledge of what a writer needs to know before writing. The TOWE is a writing process test that measures the students use of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The students were exposed to these writing conventions through the teacher's modeling of writing, literature, and mini-lessons, but they did not use them in their writing. The research does support that young children are more concerned about what they are actually writing rather than rules.

The target class C teacher/researcher feels that the students were successful in their writing because they were given the opportunity to write daily, to read their writing to an audience, and to make connections to other curricula through writing. Students seem to understand that the more they write, the better they will become.

Final Conclusions and Recommendations

The target class A, B, and C teacher/researchers can conclude that the writing workshop schedule within a "Writing to Learn" environment is a positive and beneficial strategy to improve writing skills in children. Stressing content rather than mechanics is an integral part of this belief. The research states that students who are given a consistent and daily time to write, the feeling of ownership of their writing, the individual response toward their writing, and the connection of writing to all areas of their academic and personal life show the greatest success in writing performance. The more a student writes, the more successful he/she becomes. Thus, student attitude toward writing will continue to be positive and, in cases of negative writing attitude, will improve. The teacher/researchers feel that if more research time had been allowed, a greater development of writing conventions would have become evident in post data results.

Every experience in writing, reading, and speaking can inspire more writing. The writing workshop schedule within a "Writing to Learn" environment allowed these teacher/researchers to give opportunities to their students to not only become writers but to feel like writers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Parent Writing Survey

Should formal writing skills be a part of the daily school curriculum? YES NO

If so, how much time should be devoted to writing? 15 min. 30 min. 30+ min.

Do you promote writing at home by doing any of the following? Please circle all that apply.

- list making
- writing thank you notes
- writing notes to family members
- writing notes to teachers
- writing letters
- writing poetry
- writing stories
- doing crossword puzzles
- helping your child with their writing

Does your child enjoy doing writing activities? YES NO

If yes, please list examples.

Appendix B
Knudson Writing Attitude Survey for Students

The rating scale-1 almost always, 2 often, 3 sometimes, 4, seldom, and 5 almost never
Lower scores indicate more positive attitudes toward writing than higher ones do.

Students are to circle the number for the relevant answer.

1. When I have free time, I would rather write than watch TV. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I get good grades on what I write at school. 1 2 3 4 5
3. My parents like what I write. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I like to write if I can choose the topic. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I think writing is enjoyable. 1 2 3 4 5
6. If I have free time, I would rather write than read. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I am a good writer. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I would rather write an essay than fill in the blank. (I would rather write a story or write in my journal than do seat work or write on a worksheet.)* 1 2 3 4 5
9. At school, I like to write science and social reports. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I think I could write better than I do. 1 2 3 4 5
11. You have to be a good writer to do well in school. 1 2 3 4 5
12. I would like to have more time in school to write. 1 2 3 4 5
13. I can write a complete paragraph. 1 2 3 4 5
14. I do better at school if I take notes on what the teacher says. (I do better at school if I write down what the teacher says.)* 1 2 3 4 5
15. Writing to express yourself is important in getting a good job. 1 2 3 4 5

16. I write notes to my friends. 1 2 3 4 5

17. I write letters to relatives and friends when I am not in school. 1 2 3 4 5

18. I am good at writing a whole composition. 1 2 3 4 5
(I am good at a writing a long story or long paper.)*

19. I would rather write than listen to music. 1 2 3 4 5

*Grades 1-3.

(Knudson, 1995, p. 90-97).

Appendix C
Knudson Writing Attitude Survey Results
Positive Responses, Neutral Responses, and Negative Responses

Attitude Category	Number of Targeted Class A Students			Number of Targeted Class B Students			Number of Targeted Class C Students		
	+	N	-	+	N	-	+	N	-
Preference for writing vs. other home activity									
Rather write than watch T.V.	5	2	2	0	0	3	3	12	7
Writing notes to friends	6	0	3	3	0	0	15	6	1
Write letters to relatives and friends	4	0	5	0	3	0	6	8	8
Rather write than listen to music	3	0	6	0	0	3	8	10	4
Self-assessment of writing									
Get good grades on writing assignments	6	1	2	1	2	0	12	10	0
Parents like what I write	8	0	1	3	0	0	17	4	1
Am a good writer	7	1	1	2	0	1	11	8	3
Could write better than I do	5	2	2	0	1	2	19	3	0
Have to be a good writer for school success	8	1	0	0	0	3	13	2	7
Can write a complete paragraph	6	2	1	0	0	3	0	0	22
Do better in school when I take notes	6	1	2	0	2	1	19	2	1
Good at writing whole composition	3	0	6	0	1	2	11	4	7
Personal attitude toward writing for school/job									
Like to write if choose topic	5	2	2	2	1	0	14	2	6
Think writing is enjoyable	4	3	2	0	1	2	14	6	2
Rather write than read	5	1	3	2	0	1	9	6	7
Rather write an essay than fill-in-the-blank	5	1	3	0	0	3	9	8	5
Like to write science and social reports	6	1	2	0	0	3	8	11	3
Would like to have more school time to write	5	2	2	0	1	2	12	7	3
Expressive writing is important in getting job	7	1	1	3	0	0	15	6	1
	n = 9			n - 3			n = 22		

+ (positive response)
N (neutral response)
- (negative response)

Appendix D
Knudson Interview Questions

1. When I say "writing," what do you think of? Do you think of drawing, printing, or writing like I am doing?
2. Would you rather work in a workbook, or write a story and write in a journal? What is a workbook?
3. Do you think you could write better than you do? What would you do if you wanted to write better? (Probe: What would you do to get ready to write? What would you do first?)
4. Is writing important for school success?
5. Is writing important in junior and senior high school? What kind of writing do you do in school?
6. Where do you learn to write? Who taught you or will teach you?
7. Is writing important for job success?
8. What kind of writing do you do on the job?
9. Do you like to write long stories or long reports?
10. Is there anything else you want to tell me about writing?

The purpose of the interview is to clarify points or to provide information about the nature of the students' school experience.
Students are encouraged to respond to all questions. If an "I don't know" response is given, repeat the question and probe for a response. If an "I don't know" response continues, discontinue the questioning.

(Knudson, 1995, p. 90-97).

Appendix E
TOWE Percentile Scores and Standard Scores

*Standard Scores	Description
greater than 130	Very Superior
121-130	Superior
111-120	Above Average
90-110	Average
80-89	Below Average
70-79	Poor
less than 70	Very Poor

	Target Class A				Target Class B				Target Class C			
	Item		Essay		Item		Essay		Item		Essay	
Student	%	SS	%	SS	%	SS	%	SS	%	SS	%	SS
A	10	81	5	75	2	70	5	75	1	66	NA	NA
B	<1	60	<1	63	81	113	39	96	3	73		
C	3	73	7	78	5	76	18	86	3	73		
D	23	89	58	103					3	73		
E	18	86	7	78					3	73		
F	7	78	<1	64					3	73		
G	25	90	89	118					3	73		
H	3	72	<1	64					5	75		
I	3	71	<1	63					5	75		
J									5	75		
K									5	75		
L									5	75		
M									8	79		
N									8	79		
O									14	84		
P									14	84		
Q									18	86		
R									19	87		
S									19	87		
T									21	88		
U									25	90		
V									30	92		

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*McGhee, R., Bryant, B. R., Larsen, S. C., Rivera, D. M. (1995). Test of written expression: Examiner's manual. Austin, TX: Pro-ed. pp. 26.

Appendix F
Assigned Writing Task Motivational Checklist

Teacher: ______________________ Class: ______________________

Student	Begins writing within 30-45 seconds	Draws or doodles	Reads books for ideas	Brain-storms a list of ideas	Makes an outline of ideas	**Comments**

Modified from Burke, K., (1993). The mindful school: How to assess authentic learning. Illinois: IRI/Skylight.

Appendix G
Writing Survey

Name ______________________ Date ____________

1. Are you a writer? ____________
(If your answer is YES, answer question 2a. If your answer is NO, answer 2b.)

2a. How did you learn to write? ________________________________

____

2b. How do people learn to write? ______________________________

____

3. Why do people write? ____

____

4. What do you think a good writer needs to do in order to write well? _______

____

5. How does your teacher decide which pieces of writing are the good ones?

____

6. In general, how do you feel about what you write? ________________

____

(Jenkins, 1996, p. 244)

Appendix H
"Reading the World"

Go back twenty-four hours and begin to record the details of your day. When you have finished, jot down some quick questions about yourself and the world.

Take one of the elements from the list you made when you "read the world" and write a ten-minute piece from it. Write rapidly, changing nothing. Allow thoughts and questions to enter your writing even though they may not be related to the topic with which you began. Add them right into the text. Lower your standards. Do not try to sound literary. Do not even try to write well. Continue to write short pieces until you feel relaxed about what is on the paper.

(Graves, 1994, p. 60)

Appendix I
"Author's Chair" Rules

When a student completes a first draft of a product, he or she sits in the author's chair and reads the draft to peers. Peers then discuss positive aspects of the piece and ask questions of the authors about strategy, meaning, and writing style. Because some students with disabilities may need auditory feedback in order to identify errors in their writing the author's chair strategy can be adapted so that the author listens to his or her piece as it is read by peers.

Teacher structure is important in maintaining a successful author's chair. Peers will need to learn their role as critics while the author will need to learn to accept constructive criticisms.

Peers need to tell what they liked about the piece and if it was in proper sequential order. They need to identify if the author adequately introduced and described the main characters and setting. Did they understand the plot? Was it clearly developed and explained? Does the piece have an ending that resolves the conflicts and presents the outcome's effects on the main characters? What aspects of the piece maintained the audience's attention?

Response will vary depending upon the piece that is read, therefore it may be necessary to create response keys for peers to use when critiquing different pieces. The author's chair can be used with small or large group settings.

The author needs to listen carefully to all comments and ask for feedback from as many individuals as possible. The author should not dispute or dismiss another person's reaction to his/her piece. If the author does not understand a peer critique, he/she should seek clarification or further examples. The author will need to learn to paraphrase what he/she is hearing so that he/she can restate the meaning of what he/she heard.

(Whittaker & Salend, 1991, p. l29)

Appendix J
Mini-Lesson Ideas

Titles and Subjects
Draw-A-Picture/Label It
Good beginnings
Spelling - listening for sounds, add-a-letter, invented spelling
Memories and writing
What authors do
Note taking
Peer conferencing rules
Feelings and emotions
Tone or voice
Audience
Adverbs and adjectives vs. precise strong nouns and verbs
Honesty in writing
Read aloud - then write
When we get stuck
Show rather than tell
Responding
Writing process
Planning a piece of writing
rearranging or expanding or changing
using a variety of sentences
clarity of ideas
using dialogue
improving transitions
separating facts from opinions

Environmental Print
Writing Brainstorming for: block, play area, restaurant, et.
Who's in charge of the writing?
Relating other literature to writing
Where authors get their ideas
Questions to ask themselves
Workshop procedures and Expectations: structure, tools, set-up, materials, schedule, behaviors, groups
Poetry
Focus (narrow like a photo)
Others influences

Punctuation
Skills lessons
Finished pieces
Getting ideas organized
paragraphs that "work"
eliminating repetitive ideas/ words
selecting words to set a mood
strong beginnings
strong endings
effective middles
varying rhymes and rhythms
varying punctuation
increasing reader appeal

Labeling the environment
Stories
Close eyes and picture in detail
Relating their books to subject of writing
Editing checklist; revision strategies
Pretend play
Note taking
Detailing
Time of writing
Narrative
Genre
Choosing favorite passages
Celebrating what a peer has done well
Home writing

Types
Teacher roles
Student roles
Good Sequence, sense of storyline
eliminating unnecessary ideas/words
writing to accomplish a purpose
using metaphors, exaggeration, figures of speech, humor, irony

(Atwell, 1987, p. 17-83, 123-148); (Calkins, 1994, p. 200-217); (Frank, 199, p. 131)

Appendix K
Writing Self-Assessment

____________________'s Writing Self-Assessment Date _______________

Circle the one that describes you best about each of the statements.

Key:
1 - Not Yet
2 - Rarely
3 - Sometimes
4 - Often
5 - Almost Always

My writing is neat and easy to read.	1 2 3 4 5
My words tell what I want to say clearly.	1 2 3 4 5
I choose topics I am proud to share.	1 2 3 4 5
I begin work without delay.	1 2 3 4 5
I stay on task.	1 2 3 4 5
I add details that give information.	1 2 3 4 5
I use invented spelling when necessary.	1 2 3 4 5
My sentences make sense.	1 2 3 4 5
I know where to use capitals and periods.	1 2 3 4 5

(Jenkins,.1996, p. 246)

Appendix L
Handwriting Checklist

Name ______________________________ Date ________________

	Yes	Sometimes	No
☐ LETTER SHAPES			
Do my tall letters reach above the dotted line or midpoint?	___	___	___
Do my tail letters reach down below the bottom line?	___	___	___
Do my small letters stay between the bottom line and the dotted line or midpoint?	___	___	___
Do I close my a's, d's, e's, g's and o's?	___	___	___
I need help making the letters: ____________	___	___	___
☐ SIZE			
Do I make some of my words too big?	___	___	___
Do I make some of my words too small?	___	___	___
Do I make some of my letters too big?	___	___	___
Do I make some of my letters too small?	___	___	___
☐ SLANT			
Do my letters lean in the same direction?	___	___	___
☐ SPACING			
Do I squish my words together because I forget to leave a space?	___	___	___
Do I squish the letters in my words together?	___	___	___
Do I leave too much space between my words?	___	___	___
Do I leave too much space between the letters In my words?	___	___	___
☐ ALIGNMENT			
Do my letters rest on the bottom line?	___	___	___
☐ LINE QUALITY			
Do I make wobbly letters?	___	___	___
Do I make my letters too thick?	___	___	___
Do I write neatly?	___	___	___

Look over this form and place two stars in the box next to your best handwriting area. Place one star in the box next to your next best handwriting area. The area that I will work harder on next term is __________.

(Jenkins, 1996, p. 178-179)

Appendix M

What I Wrote About In My Journal Entry Questionnaire

IN THIS JOURNAL ENTRY,	YES	NO
I wrote about what I did on a certain day.	____	____
I told everything that happened to me from the time I got up until I went to bed.	____	____
I picked one important thing that happened during the day and I wrote only about that event.	____	____
When I told what happened, I included important details to help the reader "see" the event.	____	____
When I told what happened, I included how I felt about it. I shared my thoughts and feelings.	____	____
I chose a topic that is really important to me and I included my thoughts and feelings	____	____
I took some ideas from this journal entry and used them to write a story, or a poem, or a report.	____	____

(Jenkins, 1996, p. 70)

Appendix N
Individual Writing Assignment Rubric

Conventions-Mechanics	**Organization-Cohesion**	**Story-Idea**
5 -sentence structure is accurate -spelling does not hinder readability -sometimes contain dialogue -handwriting is legible -punctuation correct -word usage is correct	**5** -overall story is organized into a beginning, middle, and an end -events are linked and cohesive -sentences are linked, often containing some transitions to help with organization: finally, then, next, etc.	**5** -includes characters -delineates a plot -contains original ideas -contains some detail -word choice contains many descriptors infrequently used (adverbs and adjectives)
4 -sentence structure generally is accurate -spelling does not hinder readability too much -sometimes contains dialogue -handwriting is legible -punctuation does not effect readability too much -word usage generally is correct	**4** -unclear of a beginning, middle, and an end of story -events appear random, but some organization exists -sample may contain some transitions to help with organization: finally, then, next, etc. -story contains many events, disrupting cohesion	**4** -includes characters, but they are not original, often coming from movies, T.V. -delineates a plot -contains original ideas but is predictable -contains some detail -word choice includes some descriptors infrequently used (adverbs and adjectives)
3 -sentence structure has a few problems -spelling is somewhat of a problem -may use dialogue but does not punctuate it correctly -handwriting is legible -punctuation is fair -problems sometimes occur with word usage	**3** -plot exists but story may still lack a beginning, middle, or an end -events are random -lacks transitions -lacks referents (pronoun mismatch) sometimes contains descriptors (adverbs and adjectives)	**3** -characters are predictable and undeveloped -plot is haphazard -may or may not contain original ideas -lacks detail -word choice is predictable.
2 -sentence structure makes story difficult to read -spelling makes it difficult to read -may use dialogue but does not punctuate it correctly -handwriting is not very legible mismatch) -punctuation is inconsistent and problematic -word usage is problematic	**2** -plot lacks organization into a beginning, middle, and an end -events are random, lacking in cohesion -lacks transitions -lacks referents (pronoun -word choice is predictable, lacking descriptors (adverbs and adjectives)	**2** -includes few if any characters -plot is not developed or apparent -contains no original ideas -detail is significantly absent -events are predictable

1	1	1
-sentence structure is problematic -spelling makes it unreadable -handwriting is illegible, making it extremely difficult to decode -punctuation is virtually nonexistent -word usage is problematic	-plot is nonexistent -events are few and random -lacks transitions -lacks referents (pronoun mismatch) -events are few and predictable -word choice lacks descriptors (adverbs and adjectives)	-includes few if any characters -plot is non-existent -contains no original ideas -detail is significantly absent

(Modified from Tindal & Hasbrouk, 1991, p. 237-245)

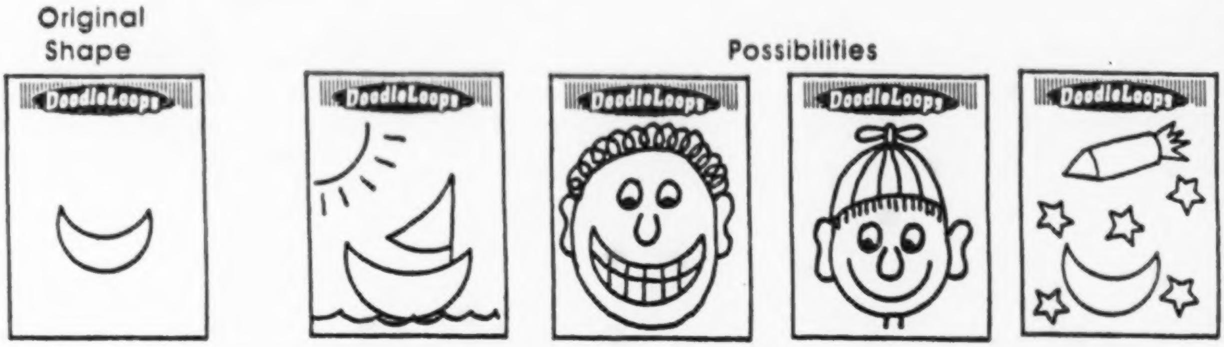
Appendix O
DoodleLoops Parent Letter

DoodleLoops

Dear Family,

This year your child will be working on some very special pages called *Drawing DoodleLoops*. These DoodleLoops are the first step in developing the creative writing process. These work sheets will be used as a tool to stimulate creative thinking. DoodleLoops have proven to be wonderful learning tools. The children love them and truly enjoy working on them every day.

The children begin with a shape, line, or object drawn on a page, and they enhance the drawing and make it into their own original "creation." For example, a shape may be enhanced as follows:



Your child may also begin to write or dictate short sentences related to the DoodleLoops. Please encourage these first attempts at writing, but remember that writing is not necessary at this point.

Please take time to discuss and share these special pages with your child when they are brought home. Thank you so much for your cooperation, involvement, and support.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Sincerely,

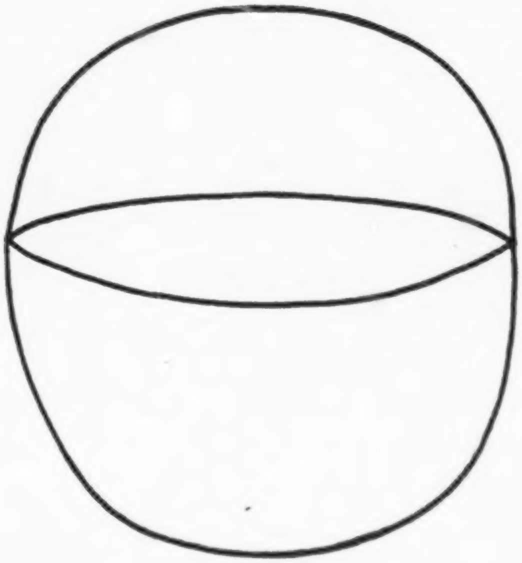
Mrs. Holden

Published by Good Apple © 1994, Sandy Baker

Appendix P

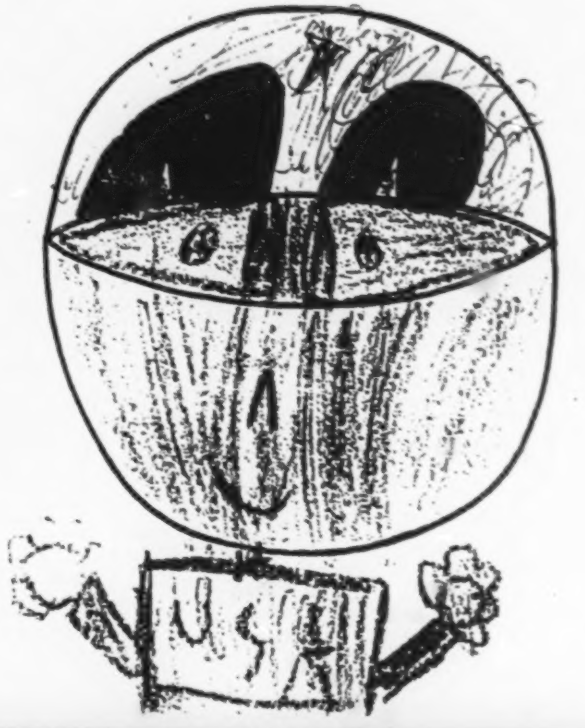
Example of DoodleLoops Activity

DoodleLoops



Mike

DoodleLoops



A astranaut mouse

Is eoing to the

moon. He landed

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix Q
"The Wheel"

The popular game show, "Wheel of Fortune," is premised on the idea that having meaning and having some letters will allow you to figure out many words. On "wheel of Fortune," meaning is provided by the category to which the word belongs. A variation of this game can be used to introduce big words and teach students to use meaning and all the letters they know. Here is how to play "the Wheel."

Remind students that many word can be figured out even if one can't decode all the parts as long as we think about what makes sense and has the parts that we do know in the right places. Ask students who have watched "Wheel of Fortune" to explain how it is played. Then explain how this version of "The Wheel" will be different:

1. Contestants guess all letters without considering if they are consonants or vowels.
2. They must have all letters filled in before they can say the word.
3. The word must fit in a sentence rather than in a category.
4. They will win paper clips instead of great prizes!
5. Vanna will not be there to turn letters!

Write a sentence on the board and draw blanks for each letter of an important word. Here is an example:

If you were to travel to Antarctica, you would be struck by its almost unbelievable _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ .

Have a student begin by asking, "Is there a . . .?" If the student guesses a correct letter, fill that letter in. Give that student one paper clip for each time that letter occurs. Let the student continue to guess letters until he or she gets a "No!" When a student asks about a letter that is not there, write the letter above the puzzle and go on to the next student.

Make sure that all letters are filled in before anyone is allowed to guess. (This really shows them the importance of spelling and attending to common spelling patterns!) Give the person who guesses the word correctly five bonus paper clips! As with other games, if someone says the answer out of turn, immediately award the bonus paper clips to the person whose turn it was. The student having the most paper clips at the end is the winner!

Students who are introduced to vocabulary by playing "The Wheel" pay close attention to the letter patterns in big words. They also get in the habit of making sure that the word they figure out based on having some of the letters fits the meaning of the sentence in which it occurs.

Note: Software versions of "Wheel of Fortune" and Hangman are available.

(Cunningham & Allington, 1994, p. 173-175)

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Appendix R
Theme Studies

1. A theme study should encourage depth, thoughtfulness, and focused inquiry.
2. Youngsters are invited to take on an inquiry stance like that of a field scientist, anthropologists, or historian.
3. Learning should be purposeful.
4. Do not contradict beliefs about writing and reading.

Launching a Theme Study

1. Immersion phase
2. Making meaning from all that's gathered
3. Reading the world: Making meaning from observation
4. Making meaning through reading
5. Writing for publication

(Calkins, 1994, p. 456- 462, 465-478).

Appendix S
Status-of-the Class Log

Student	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

Key to Abbreviations

D.1:	First Draft
D.2:	Second Draft, etc.
Ed Con Rewrite:	Editing conference with the teacher, then writing final copy of the piece
Response:	Content Conference
S:	Scheduled for Group Share
Self-Conf:	Conferring with self
S.E.:	Self-editing

(Atwell, 1987, p. 91)

Appendix T
Checklist for Order of Writing

1. Find Idea.
2. Draft 1- put ideas into writing in rough form.
3. Confer - read Draft 1 to teacher; teacher will ask clarifying questions.
4. Draft 2 - work from Draft 1 corrections.
5. Content conference with teacher or peer - does piece have meaning?
6. Self-edit - check mechanics, then turn in to teacher folder.
7. Teacher edit - teacher will correct content and mechanics.
8. Final Copy - rewrite the entire piece with all its corrections; choose to publish.

Appendix U
Target Class A Conference Log

Teacher's Conference Record For ___________

Note:
1. the date
2. the title of the piece
3. skills used correctly
4. skills taught (no more than three)
5. attitudes toward writing

(Modified from Atwell, 1987, p. 108.)

Appendix V
Target Class B Conference Log

Teacher's Conference Record For ________________

Title of Piece & Date (Comments)	Skills Used Correctly	Skills Taught (No more than 2)

(Atwell, 1987, p. 108)

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Appendix W
Target Class C Conference Log

Individual Writing Conferences

Child's Name ____________________

DATE	NOTES

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Appendix X
Target Class A Post Data Collection: Positive Journal Reflections

Jan. 29, 1997

I/A

Mrs. Cox,

I do not like writing ~~it~~ ~~[illegible]~~ But I like writing stories. Stories are fun. I think writing [illegible]. Writing helps [illegible].

Love,

[illegible]

1-28-97

I/A

Dear Mrs Cox,

I think of writing and drawing.
I would rather write in this book + [illegible] I am in.
I could try to write better.
I think writting Is Inportant for Job success because If you donot know how to write, then how will you ever get a Job and Cash Check?

Your student
Chad K.

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Appendix Y
Target Class A Post Data Collection: Informal Parent Survey

January 23, 1997

Dear Parents:

The final days of collecting data for my research project are fast approaching. As part of the follow up portion of the data collection of the writing research, I would like to again have your opinion and/or feelings about your students writing performance. This will be a less formal approach than the first parent questionairre. Please fill out the bottom portion of this letter and return it to me by January 28. All responses are, of course, strictly confidential. Thank you for your ever constant cooperation.

Sincerely,

Patty A. Cox
Special Education Teacher/Researcher

As the parent of _______________, I feel that his/her writing attitude and performance for the time from September 1, 1996 to January27 has:

(Circle one in each column)

Attitude	Performance
Has been or continues to be POSITIVE	Improved
Has been or continues to be SO-So	Stayed the same
Has been or continues to be NEGATIVE	Decreased

In a few short sentences, please explain your above response: __________________

____

____

Appendix Z
Writing Workshop Grading Checklist

_____________ has earned the following points/grade for writing workshop:

Total Possible	Area	Description	Earned
10 pts.	Chosen Literature	Fluency, speed, pacing, risk-taking, personal involvement, recognition of good writing and what authors do, makes use of prior knowledge, predicts, critiques, establishes criteria for selecting and abandoning	______
10 pts.	Dialogue Journal	Communication skills have grown while maintaining proper sentence structure	______
10 pts.	Spelling Log	Maintains a growing list of words that he/she depends on for personal writing needs	______
10 pts.	Hand-writing	Uses handwriting checklist to help reflect and/or evaluate his/her handwriting performance	______
10 pts.	Writing Content	Supplies appropriate and significant information	______
10 pts.	Clarity	Organizes and presents content to meet a reader's needs	______
10 pts.	Mechanics	Spelling, punctuation, margins, paragraphing, legibility	______
10 pts.	Focus	Narrows topics	______
10 pts.	Commit-ment	Uses time productively; confers with self and proofreads	______
10 pts.	Risk-taking	Willing to try new modes, topics, forms, techniques, etc. Goals achieved.	______
100 pts.			______

(modified from Atwell, 1987, p. 117-121)

Appendix AA
Target Class B Post Data Collection: Informal Parent Survey

January 28, 1997

Dear Parents:

The final days of collecting data for my research project are here. As part of a follow up I would appreciate it if you could fill out the attached questionnaire. The questions are regarding your child's feelings about writing since the beginning of the school year. Please fill out the bottom portion and return it to me by January 31, 1997. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Teri Pickett

As the parent of _____________, I feel that his writing attitude and writing performance from September 1, 1996 to January 31, 1997 Has:
(Circle one from each column)

Attitude	Writing performance
Has been or continues to be POSITIVE	Improved
Has been or continues to be NEUTRAL	Remained the same
Has been or continues to be NEGATIVE	Decreased

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Appendix BB
Skills List

Things that ______________ can do as a writer.

1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________
4. ______________________________
5. ______________________________
6. ______________________________
7. ______________________________
8. ______________________________
9. ______________________________
10. ______________________________
11. ______________________________
12. ______________________________
13. ______________________________
14. ______________________________
15. ______________________________
16. ______________________________
17. ______________________________
18. ______________________________

(Atwell, 1987, p. 109)

Appendix CC

Pre and Post Data for Target Class C Knudson Writing Attitude Survey Results: Positive Responses, Neutral Responses, and Negative Responses

Attitude Category	Pre Data of Targeted Class C Students			Post Data of Targeted Class C Students		
	+	N	-	+	N	-
Preference for writing vs. other home activity						
Rather write than watch T.V.	3	12	7	10	5	6
Writing notes to friends	15	6	1	8	10	3
Write letters to relatiaves and friends	6	8	8	5	8	8
Rather write than listen to music	8	10	4	11	3	7
Self-assessment of writing						
Get good grades on writing assignments	12	10	0	8	13	0
Parents like what I write	17	4	1	19	2	0
Am a good writer	11	8	3	10	11	0
Could write better than I do	19	3	0	11	5	5
Have to be a good writer for school success	13	2	7	14	5	2
Can write a complete paragraph	0	0	22	15	4	2
Do better in school when I take notes	19	2	1	16	3	2
Good at writing whole composition	11	4	7	6	6	9
Personal attitude toward writing for school/job						
Like to write if choose topic	14	2	6	16	1	5
Think writing is enjoyable	14	6	2	12	6	3
Rather write than read	9	6	7	14	5	2
Rather write an essay than fill-in-the-blank	9	8	5	11	6	5
Like to write science and social reports	8	11	3	13	4	4
Would like to have more school time to write	12	7	3	11	7	3
Expressive writing is important in getting job	15	6	1	17	4	0
	n = 22			n = 21		

+ (positive response)
N (neutral response)
- (negative response)

Appendix DD
Target Class C Content vs. Mechanics Letter to Parent

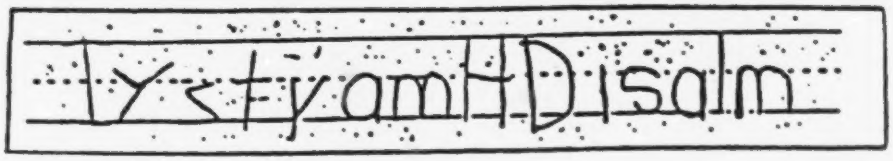
Ways To Help Your Child With Writing

Integrated Writing Program

Some parents have been wondering why children in early primary grades are bringing home papers with temporary spellings that haven't been corrected.

Do you remember when your child learned to talk? S/he probably made many "mistakes", or approximations, in speech, and they didn't bother you much. You may have corrected a few, now and then, but mostly you included the child in the events of everyday life, encouraged the child to talk, and enjoyed the conversations. You probably knew, as parents do, that children learn to talk the way they learn to sit up and crawl and walk - they learn to talk by talking.

Learning to write works the same way. For example, early in the year, one child wrote:



Now this doesn't look like your writing any more than a child's early words sound like your speech. But it's a tremendous piece of work! First of all, and most important, this child knows that written language is supposed to mean something, and he knows exactly what it means:

I was watching TV at my house. Then I saw a little mouse.

Just about every letter stands for one word in the story.

I y s tv a m H D I s a l m

Appendix EE
TOWE Pre and Post Percentile Scores for Target Class C

STUDENT	Pre Item	Post Item
A	1	37
B	3	19
C	3	7
D	3	8
E	3	91
F	3	
G	3	30
H	5	4
I	5	53
J	5	4
K	5	37
L	5	65
M	8	94
N	8	21
O	14	65
P	14	77
Q	18	89
R	19	58
S	19	53
T	21	18
U	25	77
V	30	77

Appendix FF
Assignment Sheet for Target Class A

Name ______________________ **Date** ____________

Assignment Sheet

Homeroom:	
Spelling:	
Handwriting:	
Journal:	Letter to Mrs. Cox
Reading:	Read at home every day!!!
Language:	Write at home every day!!!
Math:	
Science:	
Social Studies:	
Note:	

Appendix GG
10 Ways to Set The Write Attitude

1. **Write to your children.** Put notes in lunch boxes, in book bags, under pillows, in pockets, on bikes, on the TV- in any surprising places.

2. **Let your children see you write.** This means everything: letters, memos, grocery lists, cards.

3. **Write with your children.** Let them see you make mistakes and revise. They'll realize that writing takes time, and that rewriting is sometimes necessary.

4. **Talk with your children before they write.** Probe, prompt, praise, and question them to help them process the knowledge they already possess.

5. **Encourage your young author to draw.** Besides clarifying thoughts and ideas, drawing tells stories and expresses feelings. It also reinforces the motor skills young children need for writing.

6. **Encourage your children to take risks with writing.** Young writers need to experiment with the new words and to have faith in their ideas.

7. **Let your children know they have something to say.** They need to realize that their skills, accomplishments, and feelings are worthy and worth writing about.

8. **Emphasize the fun of writing.** Help your children discover the joy of accomplishment in choosing the right word, picking a good example, creating a vivid image, completing an engaging work.

9. **Listen to your children read their writings.** Offer praise and support for their efforts and accomplishments.

10. **Read to your children.** Read books, stories, magazines, comic strips, and poems. Encourage your children to read. The more children are exposed to other people's writing, the more background they'll have for their own.

(Goldys, 1990, p. 59)

Appendix HH
12 Write Ideas

1. **Dinner Wishes.** Give your children paper plates on which to write menus for their favorite dinners. Hang these up until you've made the special meals.

2. **Dinner Riddles.** Write a riddle about what you're serving for dinner and have the children write their guesses. Whoever's right gets extra desert. (Example: It's green and made of cut-up vegetables. You pour a liquid on it to add flavor. What is it?)

3. **Chore Chart.** Post a "Help Wanted" sign so your sometimes-hesitant helpers can list specific household chores that need to be done. As the assigned family members do these, have the children cross them off.

4. **Prose and Poetry Place Mats**. Give each child paper to create a place mat decorated with writing, The children can write a poem or story, something they'd like to talk about, something they learned in school that day, or just words.

5. **Calendar Capers.** Set up a weekly calendar with space for your children to write daily reminders about activities and special events.

6. **Winning Words.** Pin, tie, or tape, a "blue ribbon of excellence" on a child to reward a special accomplishment. Have the child write the accomplishment on the ribbon.

7. **Creative Cards.** Instead of buying birthday, thank-you, and other cards, keep colored paper, markers, sequins, stars, and the like available. Then your children can create their own cards and write their own special messages.

8. **Personal Postcards.** Keep a box of postcards collected from trips or outings. Encourage your children to occasionally write one to a friend or relative telling about their day.

9. **Writing Wrap.** When giving a gift, have your children decorate plain, colored wrapping paper with assorted messages that suit the receiver or the season.

10. **Arrival Surprise.** Have the kids make a welcome home note for Dad or Mom and tape it to the front door.

11. **Midday Memo.** Make some "memo" paper and suggest that your children write notes to put in Mom's or Dad's briefcase or lunch box.

12. **Have-a-Nice-Day Diary.** Before a child's bedtime, write together in a journal about the events of the day. It's a great way to keep in touch with your child's concerns, likes, and dislikes.

(Goldys, 1990, p. 60)